

NINTH EDITION.

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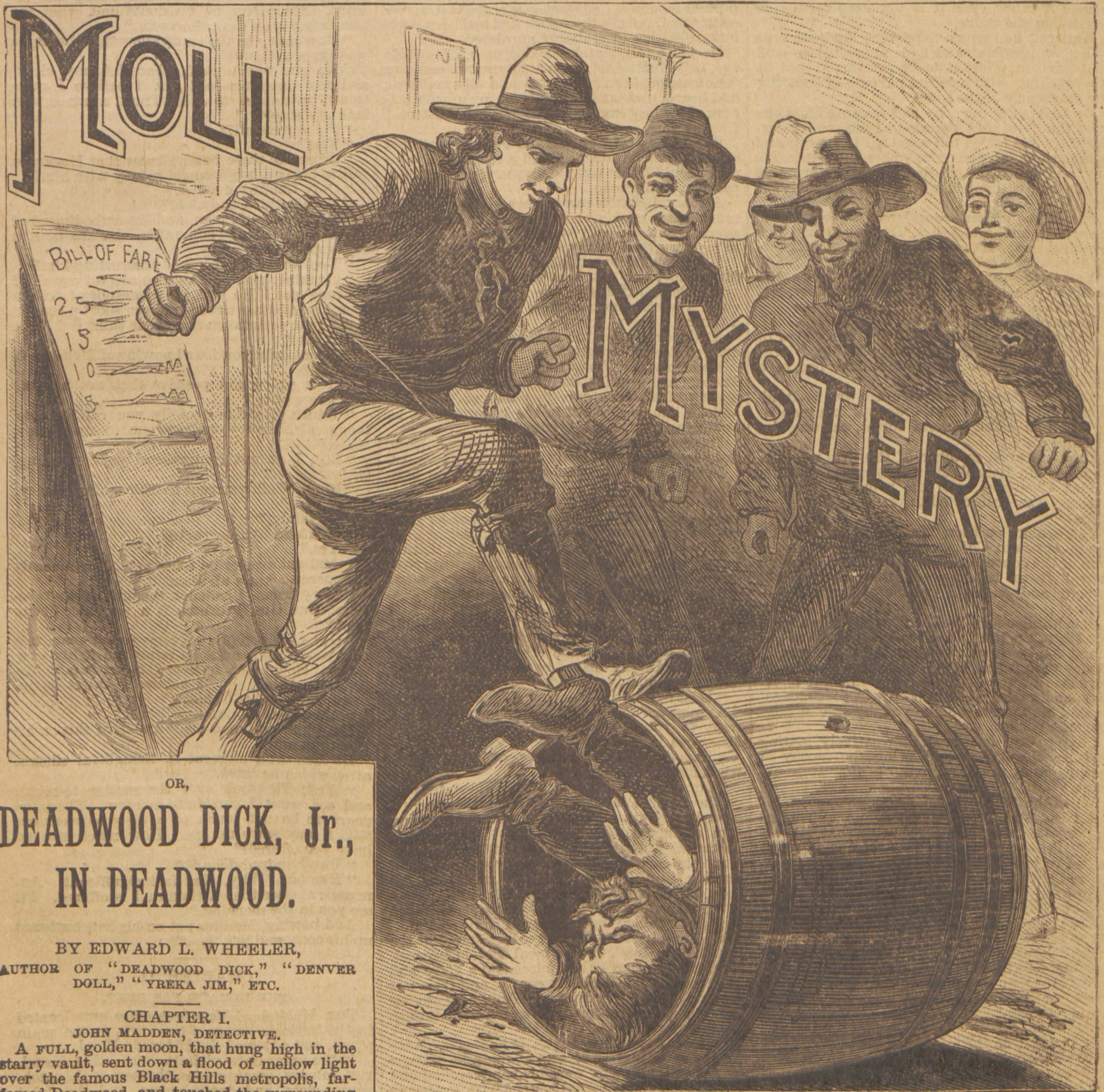
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OR,
**DEADWOOD DICK, Jr.,
IN DEADWOOD.**

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," "DENVER
DOLL," "YREKA JIM," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN MADDEN, DETECTIVE.

A FULL, golden moon, that hung high in the starry vault, sent down a flood of mellow light over the famous Black Hills metropolis, far-famed Deadwood, and touched the surrounding rugged mountain landscape with charming effect.

A CURIOUS CROWD HAILED HIS ADVENT WITH SHOUTS OF LAUGHTER AND DERISION
AS DICK PROPELLED THE CASK ALONG THE STREET.

It is not of the Deadwood of the halcyon days of '76-'77 that we speak, but of the new and bustling camp that, Phenix-like, rose from the ashes of its predecessors.

A decidedly wide-awake burg, this modern Deadwood—a shanty city then, but now possessed of numerous handsome homes, a brisk commerce, and, best of all, of law and order, which did not belong to the cremated city of nearly a decade before.

To be sure, Deadwood yet was a typical mining town, of "breezy" character, replete with the features that make up the mining-camps. There were overcrowded hotels, saloons, gaming palaces, dance-houses, and the like; the settlement was the Mecca for adventurers of every description, and for hard characters from nearly every region of the globe; fights and funerals occurred with regularity; and yet, Deadwood proudly boasted that it was rebuilt and reorganized—moralized and modernized—a place where immorality was frowned upon and crime outlawed.

She had a government, so to speak, against lawlessness, and her stalwart sheriff, Hube Hardgag, assisted by a constabulary of nervy men, who in days gone by had done Vigilante service, managed to maintain at least a semblance of order, even if it did keep them constantly on the move.

Hardgag had sworn to prevent lawlessness as much as possible, and had succeeded so well that those in position to know averred that he was working with a future purpose of securing the mayoralty of the town.

Be that as it may, he had accomplished one good thing—to rout the road-agents who in earlier days had levied toll upon the incoming and outgoing stages, and it was now quite safe for any one to travel on the roads centering at Deadwood, without fear of robbery or molestation.

Few of the citizens considered it necessary to go armed, and, altogether, Deadwood had fair reason to suppose that her sanguinary and rowdy days were a thing of the past.

Yet, in the reign of this fancied peace and prosperity, a most extraordinary robbery had occurred.

It came about in this wise:

The extensive banking and brokerage firm of McMichael & Megargee, who also did a large real-estate and speculative business, had been robbed.

The firm's main Western office was in Deadwood, and they also had branches in a number of Black Hills and Dakota towns, and an office in Chicago.

The Deadwood member of the firm was Mr. Minturn McMichael, assisted by a chief clerk, named Chadwick, and the principal Western business was transacted through the Deadwood office.

The senior partner, Mr. Megargee, had his headquarters in Chicago, and was the moneyed man of the concern, although McMichael always caused it to be supposed that he was the backer, and worth a fortune of large dimensions.

Something over a week prior to the opening of our story, the Deadwood branch of the firm had found it necessary to use a much larger sum of money than it had in its treasury, in order to purchase a tract of Black Hills mineral territory, and a telegram had been sent to Chicago, to send ten thousand dollars on, by special messenger, without delay.

Chicago had answered, affirmatively, stating that Mr. Megargee would bring the money in person, and would arrive on the 20th instant.

When the 20th came no Megargee appeared.

A telegram was sent to Chicago, inquiring as to the cause, and the answer came that Megargee had started for Deadwood, the same night he had received the request to forward the money, and nothing had since been heard from him.

Naturally, great uneasiness was felt at the Deadwood branch, but, expecting his partner by the next stage, Mr. McMichael took no immediate steps of investigation.

The following day, however, developed a most startling addition to the mystery.

Not far from the office of the firm, on Main street, an early rising miner, the next morning, found unmistakable evidences of a desperate struggle.

In the dust, in the middle of the street, there were numerous footprints, and also an imprint of where some person had lain in the dust, at full length.

Close at hand, the miner found half of a blue silk handkerchief, a box of 32-caliber short cartridges, and a long Russia-leather pocket-book,

which, although it contained no money or papers, had inscribed on the inside, the following:

"OWEN MEGARGEES, Chicago, Ill."

The name of the man who had found these articles was John Trent, and being acquainted with the fact that Owen Megargee was expected in Deadwood, he had gone at once to the office of McMichael & Megargee, aroused Jerome Chadwick, the clerk, who lodged in the office, and communicated to him his discoveries.

Chadwick at once sent for McMichael, and within half an hour a general alarm was given, that Mr. Megargee had arrived in town during the night, had been assaulted and robbed, and either murdered, or carried off a prisoner.

After basking for months in a calm of comparative quietude, it was little wonder that the camp now became worked up into a fever of excitement.

A most daring robbery had plainly been done, and beyond the evidences of the street struggle, and the two articles found by Trent, there was no clew to the perpetrators of the crime.

Minturn McMichael was apparently greatly excited, and upon beholding the pocket-book, at once pronounced it as the same he had frequently seen in the possession of his partner, and expressed no doubt but what Megargee had arrived in town, during the night, and had been waylaid, robbed, and probably murdered.

He was a tall, stately-looking man, of middle age, this McMichael, with a not unprepossessing countenance, keen gray eyes and silvered hair and beard, and was one of those men who seldom allow any excitement to get the better of them.

But in the present affair, he evinced extreme agitation, and at once offered a reward to whoever should ferret out the mystery, and find his partner, or his body.

A general search was at once inaugurated by numbers of men who were eager to corral the reward, but so deeply was the affair enveloped in mystery that their search was useless.

McMichael at once took Sheriff Hardgag into his employ, and set him to work on the case; but, although Hardgag was a shrewd sort of a chap, a week passed without his accomplishing a thing.

At the expiration of the week John Madden arrived from Chicago.

Madden was a Pinkerton detective whom McMichael had sent for, and it is on the moonlight night which opens our story that we find him and the banker closeted in the latter's office, he having arrived on the evening stage.

Madden did not look like a detective—at least, not like such as are usually pictured in romances. Indeed, he was a very ordinary looking individual.

He did not have thin, sharp, hawk-like features, nor eagle eyes, nor did he look as if he possessed an excess of lightning intelligence.

He was a short, thick-set individual, with a large, round face, close trimmed brown beard, brown eyes, and hair of the same color; and, as for his attire, it was simply plain and serviceable.

"I am glad you have come," McMichael said, as the two became seated, with an office table between them. "All the efforts of myself and Sheriff Hardgag have been unavailing; the matter remains in a cloud of mystery."

"Most cases do, for a time," Madden replied. "As soon as detailed to work on this case, I went to your Chicago office. I found young Megargee in charge."

"Exactly. He takes care of the business when his father is away!"

"I questioned the young man. He stated that on the twelfth of the month his father had received a telegram from you asking for a large sum of money. It being about the time Mr. Megargee usually takes his vacation, he concluded to carry the money in person, instead of sending it by Express. So he started from Chicago, his own son seeing him off."

"He bought a ticket for Yankton," continued Madden. "Leaving Chicago, I came to Yankton. Found Owen Megargee registered at the St. Charles Hotel, for one meal only. I learned, furthermore, that he had purchased a horse and ridden away in a westerly course, and then was seen no more. I came from Yankton here, by the usual route, but on my way found no tidings of your partner."

"I am sorry to hear that. If he was in Yankton, he, as a matter of course, must have come here, for, if not, why were his handkerchief and pocketbook found here, together with evidences of a struggle?"

"Very likely he did come here. Allow me to examine the articles found."

McMichael produced them from a drawer in the table, and handed them to the detective, who looked them over thoughtfully.

"If Mr. Megargee was assaulted, as we have reason to infer," he observed, "it is evident the assault was made with felonious intent."

"Yes."

"And by a person who was not particular whether he left a clew behind or not, else he would not have left these articles."

"How do you account for the half of a handkerchief, sir?"

"Oh! there are several ways to account for that. The missing portion may have been used to bind the prisoner's hands."

"Then you do not think my partner was killed?"

"Most likely not—at least not where the struggle took place. Mr. Megargee was expected by you on the 20th?"

"Yes."

"Humph! To-day is the 2d. Two weeks have elapsed since the assault was made. You say a thorough search has been made for his remains, and not the slightest trace of them found?"

"Yes. Full a score of parties have taken part in the search, in hope of winning the reward. There can be no doubt but what the search has been most thorough."

"How many in the camp knew that Megargee was expected here?"

"No one but myself, Chadwick, my clerk, and my daughter—ah! yes, I believe I mentioned his coming to John Trent, a miner, who is in my employ."

"These were all?"

"Yes."

"Of course these parties knew that Megargee was to bring a large sum of money with him?"

"Only Chadwick and I."

"Who is this Chadwick?"

"My right-hand man, and the embodiment of all that is noble and honorable. He has been in my employ since a boy."

"You would not think of mistrusting him?"

"Certainly not. I'd as soon suspect myself of a wrong act. He handles thousands of dollars monthly, and has never yet been short a cent."

"You are mistaken about one thing."

"What?"

"About only you four knowing of Megargee's coming!"

"How so? I am positive that not another soul knew of it."

"Which proves how easily you can be mistaken, sir. Every one is prone to make mistakes."

"But, I do not comprehend your meaning, sir."

"Not? Well, you sent to Chicago for money, didn't you?"

"Certainly."

"You sent by telegraph?"

"Yes."

"And got answer by telegraph. Consequently the operator knew all about it."

"Very true. I had not thought of that before. But, Gus Thornton is a very nice young man."

"Oh! undoubtedly. Every young man is a nice young man until he is proven to the contrary. How much money did you expect Megargee to bring, sir? I believe I forgot to inquire before I left Chicago."

"About ten thousand dollars."

The Pinkerton man made a note of this on his memorandum.

He then sat a moment in thoughtful silence, after which he arose.

"Well, I'll think over the matter to-night, and see what I can do to-morrow. There appears to be not much of a clew to work on; still, I may scare up one. How much reward have you offered?"

"Two hundred dollars."

"Humph! Why, that is insignificant. Announce at once that a thousand is offered. I'll see you in the morning."

And bowing, Madden put on his hat, buttoned up his coat, and left the office.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEMAND FOR RENT.

THE McMichael-Megargee office was located in the business center of the town, on the main street, and adjoined the Eldorado Hotel.

In the immediate vicinity were other hostleries, saloons, gaming-dens, theaters of the catch-penny class, and dance-houses, and the street was thronged with swarms of people from early in the morning, until long after midnight.

On the opposite side of the street from McMichael's office was the new variety theater and rum-ranch combined, and a few doors below this was a new shanty with a store front.

On the evening which opens our story, this store had for the first opened its doors for business, and over the door, a gilt-lettered sign announced that it was the "Boston Cheap Restaurant," while numerous placards in the window announced that a choice of such dishes as "Beef Stew," "Boston Baked Beans," "Coffee and Biscuits," "Pie and Milk" etc., etc., could be had for the nominal charge of twenty-five cents each dish.

Within doors, a long counter ran back to a partition which divided the main apartment from the kitchen.

In front of the counter was an array of stools for the accommodation of patrons; behind the counter was a decidedly pretty girl, who stood in waiting to serve any customers who might desire to eat.

The Boston Cheap Restaurant, with its brilliantly lighted interior, was a new thing for Deadwood, and numberless people in passing, paused a moment to survey the place, although no one offered to patronize it.

At least, no one did, until about an hour subsequent to John Madden's interview with Minturn McMichael; then, the little eating-house got its first customer.

He chanced to be a pleasant-looking, genteelly dressed young man, with keen brown eyes, and hair to match—a fellow whose well-knit figure indicated strength, and whose intelligent face was attractive enough to win the admiration of any susceptible young lady.

A sachel carried in one hand proclaimed that he had but recently arrived in town.

Depositing the sachel on the floor, he took a seat at the counter.

"I will have baked beans, and some biscuits and coffee, if you please, miss," he said, and the order was promptly filled by the hazel-eyed girl, whom the stranger at once privately voted was a beauty—and just about seventeen.

A steaming plate of beans, a plate of delicious warm biscuits, and a cup of fragrant coffee were at once placed in front of the stranger, and he proceeded to do justice to the repast, in a way that proved him to be tolerably hungry.

"Why, these biscuits are just immense, miss!" he said, as he finished the first of them. "Did you bake them?"

"Yes, sir. I am glad you like them," was the modest reply.

"Well, you bet I do! Haven't struck such a snap as this in a dog's age. Bet I don't want no hotel chuck when I can get such as this. Just fetch on another plate of them daisies, miss, and I'll guarantee to foot the bill, if I go bankrupt."

Accordingly another plate was forthcoming.

"New place?" queried the stranger, as he gazed around, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir. We just opened for the first, to-night, sir, and you are my first customer!" was the pleasant answer.

"Well! well! You don't say so! I'm glad I dropped in, and you can count on me as a regular boarder, while I stay in Deadwood."

"We shall be very glad, sir. We want as many boarders as we can get, and, indeed, we shall have to have quite a number, to enable us to pay the rent."

"You're not alone, then?"

"No, sir—that is, I have my father living. But, he is blind, and can earn but little, with his violin. I attend to this place, myself."

At this juncture their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a well-dressed gentleman, who was none other than Minturn McMichael.

"Good-evening, Miss Barlow!" he said, pausing at the counter.

"Good-evening, Mr. McMichael," was the young lady's response, her expression indicating some surprise, at the banker's call. "It is quite a pleasant evening out."

"So it is, my dear—so it is! You see—ahem!—I noticed that you had got the place open for business, my dear, and, as I was passing, I thought I'd just drop in and collect the first week's rent!"

"The first week's rent, sir!" Miss Barlow cried, in evident surprise.

"Exactly. The first week's rent, which will be ten dollars!"

"But, sir, we were not to pay in advance, you know."

"Oh! I believe there was something said about that when the old man rented the place, but I've changed my mind, and must have my rent in advance."

"But, Mr. McMichael, this is not using us fair. You know it cost us what little money we had, to get started here, and we haven't taken any money in yet, and—" here pretty Miss Barlow was about ready to cry.

McMichael's face grew hard and stern of expression.

"That's no fault of mine!" he returned. "You wanted the place, and ought to have known that you would have to pay for it. You ain't responsible for the rent, and so I must have it in advance. If you can't pay it, why you'll have to get out. Jim Mully wants it for a whisky shop, an' will pay in advance."

"Oh! Mr. McMichael! Surely you will not turn us out of doors, when we have just got settled, with a prospect of making a few dollars? Surely you cannot be as hard-hearted as that?"

"It's not a question of hearts, but dollars," was the unfeeling response. "I need all that's due me, and must have it!"

"But, sir, you are rich and we are very poor. If you will only wait till the end of the week, I am sure we can earn enough to pay you!"

"I can't wait, nor won't wait!" was the blunt answer. "Either you pay me ten dollars, or out you go, baked beans and all!"

"See here, boss!" spoke up the stranger, who had just finished his supper, "why don't you give the blind man and his daughter a show for their white alley? You can well afford to give 'em a little chance to get started, and then they will be able to pay you."

"What's that your business?" retorted the banker, angrily. "Who are you, I'd like to know, that have the impudence to interfere in my business?"

"My name, sir, is Richard Bristol—Dick Bristol, for short!" was the reply. "If you care to know further, concerning my lineage, sit down, and in a jiffy I can take you 'way back to my oldest bald-headed grandfather of antediluvian times!"

"Bah! You're a big-mouthed vagabond, and I'll have the sheriff run you out of town!" was the growling response of the banker, who had no liking for Dick's freshness. "As for you, Bertha Barlow, will you pay me the money, now, or not?"

"Mr. McMichael, I have not got it."

"Very well. Mully shall have the place, then. I'll send Shanky Slob to put your things out. Good-evening!" and with this, the banker strode from the place.

While poor Bertha covered her face with her hands, and wept softly to herself.

"Hello! Don't cry, Miss Barlow!" Dick Bristol encouraged. "Don't mind what that old customer says. You'll not be molested, you can bet high on that!"

"Oh! sir, but you don't know Mr. McMichael. He is a very cruel and hard-hearted man, and he will have us ejected from these premises, after we have laid out the last of the few dollars we had. It is too bad, sir. God only knows what we will do, after we are put out of here!"

"But, you ain't put out yet, I tell you, and, what's more, you ain't goin' to be put out while Dick Bristol is on deck."

"But, sir, how can you prevent it?"

"Oh! easy enough, don't fear. Why, I'll buy out the shebang, and make you a present of it, before I'll see a pretty little biscuit-builder like you in trouble."

"You are very kind, sir, but I beg that you will not interfere. You are a stranger in this rough place, and were you to interfere, McMichael, who is rich and influential, would set every one against you, and there is no telling what would happen to you!"

"McMichael be hanged!" Dick replied. "I'm not afraid of him nor his money-bags. I don't owe him a cent, and if he comes barkin' at me he may accidentally find that he's after the wrong species of game. Here's a dollar for the grub I've had, miss, and I'll just wait around here, a bit, till the music begins!"

"Oh! sir, McMichael threatened to send Shanky Slob here, and you must not encounter him, for he is the worst ruffian in the camp."

"Oh! is he? A regular pick-em-up an' swaller 'em down, eh? A double-distilled terror, as it were."

"Oh! he is a very ferocious and savage wretch, sir, and would just as lief shoot you as to look at you! Even Hube Hardgag is said to be afraid of him."

"Who is Hube Hardgag?"

"The sheriff."

"Ah! Well, now, don't you worry about me, Miss Bertha. If the holy terror, Shanky Slob, comes meandering around here, on mischief bent, I'll show him the way to the door!"

"Sh! oh! dear! Here comes the horrid thing,

now! Please do not get into a fight with him, Mr. Bristol!"

"I'll break his head if he makes any trouble!" Dick replied, but not so loud that Bertha could hear him.

Just then a man's figure darkened the doorway, and the terror of Deadwood strode into the room, a burly, long-legged individual, who was familiarly and unpopularly known as Shanky Slob, ruffian, vagabond, pugilist, drunkard, and goodness only knows what else.

CHAPTER III.

SLOB STRIKES A SNAG.

If ever Divine Providence permitted a homely and disgusting-looking mortal to exist upon the face of this fair earth, that man was Sylvester Slob, or as he was better known in the mines, "Shanky" Slob—the title "Shanky" having been given him owing to the extreme length and crookedness of his legs.

He was a large, powerfully-built individual, with huge arms and hands, and an enormous head; but his lower limbs were so slim and attenuated that they seemed illy able to support his ponderous trunk.

His face was broad and naturally homely, with its big mouth, greenish eyes and shaggy overhanging brows, and, to make it even more loathsome in appearance, was covered with eruptions and scars, with here and there a patch of beard, where disease had not destroyed the hirsute rooting.

His ears, too, were almost elephantine in proportion.

His dress was coarse, ragged and greasy, and, all in all, one could search a long ways without encountering a more repulsive-looking human being.

In the belt around his waist were revolvers and a knife upon whose blade bloodstains were incrustated, all of which added to his repulse as ruffian and tough.

He paused just within the Boston Cheap Restaurant, and with his hands supported on his hips, glared about him inquiringly.

"Waal, hillo, hyer!" he saluted. "So yer ain't picked up yer traps an' dusted out, hey, as ye war told to, by Mister McMichael?"

"Not by any means!" Dick replied, stepping forward and confronting the individual, without the least apparent hesitation.

"What is more, we haven't the slightest intention of leaving this place, my Hottentot friend!"

"Oh! yer hain't, hey? Waal, I should presume to allow that you don't know what yer sayin', do yer? Didn't his giblets, the guv'nor, tell the gal she'd hev to git out, because she warn't able to pay the rent? an' didn't he say he war goin' to send Shanky Slob tew put her out? Hey? Ain't that what he said?"

"Well, what if he did?"

"A heap! I'm Shanky Slob; that's who I am! I'm a pizen pansy from the Pacific—a dangerous daisy from Devil's Delight! That's who I am!"

"What do you suppose I care who you are, except that you are the most disgusting-looking scarecrow I ever set eyes upon. Why, if you were to stay here five minutes more you'd taint all the victuals. So hump yourself and make a move out of here before I climb all over ye!"

"What?" the ruffian ejaculated, evidently truly astonished at the other's audacity in making such an order—"what did I hear then? Did you speak then, or was et all in my imagination that I thort I heerd some one say suthin'?"

"Yes, I spoke!" Dick cried, "and I'll tell you just once more to get out of this store, or I'll give you assistance that will carry you out."

"You will, hey?"

"Yes, I will!"

"An' who in thunder aire you? I had orders to come hyer ter put the gal out, an' I'm heer fer that purpose!"

"You will be under the necessity, then, of vamping without accomplishing your purpose!" Dick replied, "for no girl goes out of here when I'm about. So, if you want to get off with a whole skull, trot right along off before I land you in the street. Go tell the old curmudgeon who sent you here that he'll need to send a couple of hundred like you to put Bertha Barlow out of this ranch, when Deadwood Dick, Junior, is a—"

Here the young man stopped short, for it was a slip of the tongue that had caused him to give away his identity—a thing he had not intended to do, especially in this Black Hills metropolis, where the name of the original Deadwood Dick was still fresh in the memory of the older residents.

But it was too late.

If Slob had only been as deaf as he was homely, it would have been all right.

Such, however, was not the case, for he caught as quickly at the name as a drowning man might clutch at a straw.

"Oho! So you're Deadwood Dick Junior, aire ye?" he ejaculated. "Kinder strikes me I've heerd tell on you up in Montana, so et do! You're the young cuss w'ot seeks ter git notoriety from bucklin' onter ther name o' ther durned outlaw as youst ter cavort 'round hyer raisin' thunder, aire ye? Waal, by ther hoppin' Hannaher! you've kim ter jest ther right burg ef you're searchin' partier bad arter fight. Thar's plenty o' galoots as will sneeze seven snickers to get a chance at you, an' I am jest one o' them cavortin' calla-lily cherubs, you bet!"

And without further warning, the ruffian jumped forward, and aimed to hit Dick a terrific blow with one of his sledge-hammer fists.

He fell short of his mark, however, and got an effective blow over the left optic, that caused him to reel.

It would have taken even a harder blow, however, to have floored the chap, and quickly recovering, he made a second rush at his opponent with a snarl of rage.

"Oh! ye durned leetle cuss!" he cried, "I'll git squar' wi' yon, an' don't yer fergit et! Ef ye think ter insult Shanky Slob an' live, you've sot yer fut inter ther wrong bucket o' water. I'm a holy terror, I am, an' I am goin' to make a mutton out o' you!"

"If you can," assented Dick, Jr. "It generally takes two to make a bargain!"

Then, just as Slob would have clinched him in a bear-like hug, downward ducked the young detective's head and caught the ruffian in the pit of the stomach with sufficient force to double him up like a jack-knife, and send him to the floor, where he sat and gave vent to gasps for breath.

Deadwood Dick was not through with him, however, for quickly raising the doubled-up and literally paralyzed Slob from the floor, the young athlete crammed him down into an empty crockery cask standing near by, in such a manner that only Slob's head, hands and feet protruded therefrom; then tipping over the cask he began to roll the queer receptacle toward the door.

To save his face from injury, Slob strove to use his hands, but in vain, for he was rolled out into the street. A curious crowd hailed his advent with shouts of laughter and derision as Dick propelled the cask along the street, until he came to a creek running through the town, when into the muddy water he tumbled the big barrel and its contents.

Not waiting to see what became of the would-be "chaw'em-up," Bristol strode leisurely back toward the restaurant.

Slob's piteous cries for succor quickly brought a couple of his pals to his assistance, and he made his escape from the cask more dead than alive, and sunk down upon the bank of the creek nearly exhausted.

It was several minutes ere he could find power of speech, but when he did he made sufficient use of it in a profane way to start even the rough crowd who surrounded him.

"What war ther matter, Slob?" queried Rumfaced Rolfe, one of the "cavortin' calla-lily's" pals. "How in thunder did ye cum in that big bar'l, an' what war the feller a-doin' a-cartin' you around?"

"None o' yer cussed bizness!" gritted Slob, when he had succeeded in steadying himself upon his feet. "I war settin' on the bar'l up ter the restyrant, arter gittin' me supper, when the head caved in, and thet cuss tuk advantage o' me an' rolled me inter the crick. Durn me ef I could help myself a bit, but if I don't hev revenge on thet sardine ye kin call Shanky Slob a no-good from Nowhar. I tell ye, by ther hootin' Hannaher! thar's goin' ter be blood on ther moon ter-night, an' ef ye want see ther sarcus jest waltz down in ther vicinity o' ther grub-shop, an' I'll j'ine ye as soon as I see ther guv'nor."

Mostly everybody in Deadwood was wont to term Minturn McMichael the "guv'nor," not because that individual ever had any particular gubernatorial aspirations, but because he was one of the principal aristocrats of the Black Hills city.

So Slob took his way to the McMichael residence and found the "guv'nor" seated upon the doorstep, smoking a cigar, and evidently engaged in some unpleasant reflection, as his brows were knitted sullenly.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, as Slob rather cringingly approached. "Where in the blazes have you been?" with a deprecating

glance at the "terror's" water-soaked garments.

"Whar've I been?" repeated Shanky, in disgust. "Ye didn't see ther caryvan an' circus, hey?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, consarn it, you know well enough, You told me you hed been to see the gal, an' ye contracted wi' me ter go an' vacate her outen o' yer premises!"

"Exactly. Didn't you do it?"

"Do it? Waal, no! I should presume ter suppose thet I didn't do nothin' o' the sort. What I bargained to do was to put the girl out. I didn't agree to hev a Greek-oh-Roman wrestlin' 'bout wi' an earthquake, nary time!"

"You don't mean to say the girl scared you off?"

"Nixee, Maginnis! Do I look like er consarned cavortin' cauliflower as would be skeert by ary female, like Blind Barlow's daughter? Waal, I guess not! I'm a cuckoo an' a carver, wi' six-inch fightin' spurs, but I'll be teetctally smothered in smudgz, ef I bargained ter be converted inter a crockery cask!"

"Nonsense! Are you drunk, crazy, or what are you talking about?"

"Ye doan't purtend to know ary thing erbout et, do yer? Waal, I'll tell you. I went ter ther restyrant to order the gal away. When I got thar, I found a cheeky young feller thar as allowed et would require a considerable number of me ter put him or ther gal out. I tried to argue with him that such war not the case. Then, what d'ye s'pose he done?"

"Blacked your eye, I see."

"He did that same. I see'd more stars than ther's on ther star bangled spanner, you bet! Then he butted me over with his head, scrubbed up the floor wi' me, chucked me inter a crockery cask, an' then trotted me over to the creek an' dumped me inter the water. Now, then, that's what I got fer tacklin' a two-dollar job, an' I want my durocks right away off, so I can go and lick up!"

"But, you didn't eject the girl from the premises?"

"No, I allow I didn't; an' thar ain't any two men as can put her out while the young feller stands in wi' her. He's chain lightning on wheels, he is, an' ye can tackle him ef yer want—I ain't quite so anxious as I war. Why, guv'nor, he's heeled like a hedge-hog, an' I'll bet he kin shute ther spectacles off'n ther man in the moon!"

"Pshaw! You're a blundering coward!" McMichael growled, angrily. "I'm not afraid of a dozen young whelps like him. I'll go and put him out myself!"

"Keerful! keerful, guv'nor! Ye'd better speak to ther undertaker afore ye tackle that cuss. Yer see, I know who he is, an' he'd jes' as lief convart yer carcass inter a sieve, as ter luk at yer!"

"You know him?"

"You bet yer bottom dollar! He's a hoppin' Hannaher, he is!"

"How came you to know him? Who is he, that any one should stand in fear of him?" McMichael demanded, watching the tough suspiciously.

"Waal, boss," Slob answered, taking off his hat and scratching at his frowsy head, "et kinder strikes me as how he be a chap who orter know suthin' about ther quare disappearance o' yer partner an' his boodle!"

"The devil you say!"

"No, ther chap at ther grub ranch!"

"Explain yourself at once. If there is any possibility that the young fellow was connected with that robbery, I will have him arrested at once!"

"Ye don't say so! Waal, now, yer a generous an' capable old chap. How much spot cash will ye give me fer ther benefit o' my suspicion?"

"Not a dollar."

"Then yer kan't have et. Mebbe I kin sell et ter yer detective, John Madden!"

McMichael scowled, and uttered an oath.

"What do you know about him?" he repeated.

"Oh, I know Madden's kem hyer to Deadwood to ferret out ther mystery o' ther robbery!" Slob replied, "an' he's chain lightnin' at workin' up cases—one o' ther quiet kind o' hogs what swallers all ther swill, ye see. Thar's no tellin' who he may suspicion o' connection wi' ther robbery, an' ef et was my case, I'd try to saddle off suspicion as fur away frum home as possible!"

"What do you mean?" McMichael demanded, threateningly, as he took a step nearer the tough. "Dare you to hint, sir, that—"

"I ain't hintin' nothin'!" Slob replied. "But this ere feller at the restyrant aire a sp'icious character, an' et might be possible that he aire ther galoot as did the job!"

"Very true," McMichael asserted, musingly. "If it be true that he is a suspicious character, as you intimate, his case must of course be investigated. You say you know who he is?"

"In course I does."

"Then go ahead. Name your price within reasonable bounds, providing you have any information, and then talk!"

"Tell ye what I know fer fifty dollars!"

"Go ahead!"

And taking a handful of gold coin from his pocket, the broker counted out the required sum and gave it to the man.

"Waal, ef ye remember back, not long ergo," Slob began, as he stowed the money away in his pocket, "you'll reckerlect that these yere parts uster be raised thunder with, by a lively flea of a cuss, called Deadwood Dick!"

"I have reason to remember him well!" McMichael said, "for I was a loser by one of his stage-robberies. He is dead, however, at last."

"Kerect; but his namesake still lives. Ther feller at the restyrant calls hisself Deadwood Dick, Junior—told me hisself he war. He aims ter travel in ther boots of t'other Dick, an' he aire jest ther chap ter do et. Up at Hoop-la, in Montana, ther sheriff would like ter interview him, an' I presume thar aire plenty o' others as would, inkludin' myself."

"But the fellow told me his name was Dick Bristol?"

"So et aire, an' he calls hisself Deadwood Dick, Junior, ter boot, an' ther blazes only knows how many other handles."

"But what proof is there that he is Deadwood Dick, Junior?"

"I heerd him call hisself that, before he chucked me inter the pond. Besides, I've hearn tell that the real Deadwood Dick, Junior, has got his name tattooed on his right arm."

"Then the chap must be arrested at once. The very fact of his masquerading under the name of a former noted outlaw, is sufficient to class him as a suspicious character, and I have no doubt but what he may have been in some way concerned in the robbery of my partner. If such proves to be the case, Slob, you shall be richly rewarded."

"Kerect, boss! Ef ye want any fu'st-class sw'arin', jest feed the coffers o' your 'umble sarvent, an' he kin sw'ar ther shingles off'n a Baptist meeting-house. Goin' ter arrest ther chap yerself?"

"Well, no; I think I'll put the sheriff onto the case. He ain't afraid of any man, and if he should accidentally get popped over, it wouldn't be a matter of so much consequence as though I were to get shot. Yes, I'll get Hardgag after this Deadwood Dick, Junior, and have him jailed, pending examination. I am in hopes his arrest will be the means of throwing some light on the robbery, at least."

And with this conclusion the broker walked away toward the main part of the town.

Not so with Shanky Slob.

He was not desirous of showing himself in the vicinity of the restaurant again, until the dangerous hands of Deadwood Dick, Junior, were safely handcuffed.

Besides, there was a yearning in his stomach for several fingers of bug-juice; and he straightway made his way toward a saloon where he could get a "brimmer" of "throat-tickler" for the economical sum of fifteen cents.

CHAPTER IV.

DEADWOOD DICK, JR., DEFILES ALL DEADWOOD.

THE news he had received from Shanky evidently had considerably elated McMichael, for there was a gleam of exultation in his eyes as he made his way toward the Keno Club, a gambling institution where Hube Hardgag, the sheriff, usually held out, when off duty.

"That Slob is right!" the broker said, as he made his way along, "John Madden is not particular on whom he fixes suspicion, to win a case, and, as Slob hinted, he is as likely to shy suspicion at me as any one else, which I wouldn't have happen for the world, just now, when I've got my eye on the future mayorship of the town. Slob is right, and a much shrewder vagabond than I gave him credit for being."

"This Dick Bristol, or Deadwood Dick Junior, must be pulled in, and charged with the robbery and murder of Owen Megargee, whether he is guilty or not. He is an impudent young adventurer and sport at best, and were he left at liberty, would be just as likely to work me some trouble as not; for, no doubt, he would interfere with my plans concerning Bertha Barlow—"

plans, by Heaven, that it shall mean death for any man to interfere in!

"Yes, Deadwood Dick, Junior, must go to jail, and once he is there, I will see that he don't come out very soon again, unless a jury sentences him to the gallows."

Such was the broker's muttered soliloquy, as he made his way toward the Keno Club.

On arrival there, he found Hardgag seated alone at one of the walnut tables of the magnificently furnished apartment.

He was a burly, iron-muscled six-footer, this Hardgag, with a dark, swarthy complexion and black eyes, hair and beard.

There were no ruffianly expressions of character about the face of the man, however; indeed, one would naturally have taken him for a kind and big-hearted chap, who had friends by the score, and no end to enemies.

Such was not the case, however.

He had but few friends in the camp, because he did not seek any one's friendship.

He was alike cold, stern and indifferent to everybody, and seemed to live for no other purpose than to accumulate what money he could, and store it away.

He was fully on as good terms with Minturn McMichael as with any one else; but it was only because he frequently got considerable sums of money out of the broker, for various odd jobs.

So he nodded pleasantly as the broker took a seat at the table opposite him.

"Well, have you succeeded yet in making any discoveries connected with the mysterious robbery case, sheriff?" McMichael asked.

"None whatever, sir. So far as I can see, the matter is still enveloped in an impenetrable mystery, which has no speedy prospect of solution. I sometimes doubt if Megargee came here at all!"

"Ah! But, if not, how came the pocket-book here?"

"It may have been sent here to be dropped, so as to give out the impression that Megargee did reach Deadwood."

"I think I comprehend what you are driving at," McMichael said. "You have an idea that Megargee may have absconded with the money himself?"

"Is it not possible?"

"No. What causes you to suppose so?"

"Well, the firm is largely in debt—out in these parts, at least!"

"Indeed? Where did you acquire your information?"

"It matters not. I know whereof I speak, even if I decline to tell."

"Did Chadwick tell you?"

"No!"

"He didn't, eh? He'd better not let me catch him leaking on business affairs, as it will be worth his situation. Well, it don't matter if we are in debt out here, our Chicago capital is ample. Besides a fat stock capital, Megargee is a large owner of real estate. So your argument is unreasonable, as he would be a fool to run away and carry off comparatively a few dollars, and leave behind him a fortune. No! no! there's no sense in such an argument. It is simply preposterous. Owen Megargee undoubtedly came to this camp, having on his person the money he was to bring, and was waylaid, robbed and murdered by some person who acquired the knowledge of his motive in coming to this place. And I believe I can show you the guilty person in ten minutes, or less time!"

"The deuce. Then, you must have made a discovery!"

"So I have. Did you ever hear tell of Deadwood Dick, the road-agent?"

"Yes, many's the time. I gave him a chase once, before old Deadwood was burned down, but it was no use. The devil himself couldn't catch that scoundrel. It was only grim death that finally got in the deal on him!"

"He's dead, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, he may be dead, but his counterpart is here in Deadwood—a young chap, with impudence and gall enough to equal that of his predecessor. And, what do you think? He stepped in here as big as life, in the very camp where Deadwood Dick was most feared and hated, and has the cheek to set himself up as Deadwood Dick, Junior!"

"You don't say! Where is he? Have you seen him?"

"Yes. I went up to Barlow's place, to collect the rent, and he was there. The girl hadn't the rent, an' I told her she'd have to vacate. Then, the young case chipped in, and offered to espouse her cause, so I left, and sent Shanky Slob to put the girl out. Well, sir, the young whelp blacked Shanky's eye, picked him up and jam-

med him into a crockery barrel, and rolled him out and chucked him into the creek. Now, then, what do you think of that?"

"Served Shanky just right, and would have been a fitting reception to have sprung on you, too!"

"What do you mean, sir?" growled McMichael.

"Just what I say. You ought to have got the ducking, instead of Slob!"

"Why so?"

"Fer tryin' ter put the gal out before she's had a chance to earn a cent. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Well, I don't know as it is any of your business, if I want my rent in advance!" hotly.

"Maybe it ain't, guv'nor, but I hope the gal sticks to her place, till she gets to makin' money to pay you your rent!"

"Humph! If you're so deeply interested in her, supposin' you pay her rent!" McMichael growled.

"How much is it?"

"Ten dollars," was the hesitating reply, for the broker was really sorry he had made the proposition.

"All right. Here's your money!" Hardgag said, tossing a gold coin on the table. "Now, sir, see that you leave Bertha Barlow alone!"

"I won't take your money. It's not hers!"

"It amounts to just the same, and squares her present indebtedness to you. You take it, and let her alone, or I will break your infernal head for you!"

"Oh! you will!"

"Yes, I will!"

And the sheriff's looks seemed to indicate that he meant just what he said.

"Humph! Is this the way you talk to me, after all I have done for you, sir?"

"You're no more to me than any other man!" Hardgag said, unhesitatingly, "and I don't care a cent more for you than I do any other."

What I say is, there's the ten dollars to pay Bertha Barlow's rent. Take it or let it alone, as you choose; but, mind you one thing—let her alone, or it will be the worse for you!"

"Keep your money, and I'll agree not to bother the midget!" McMichael said, changing his demeanor. "I want your services, so it's no time for us to quarrel, who have always been on good terms!"

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want you to go arrest this Deadwood Dick, Jr!"

"What for?"

"On the charges of the robbery and murder of Owen Megargee!"

"Who prefers the charge?"

"I do."

"What basis have you got for making the charge?"

"I have reasons which I will make known at the hearing, one of which is that this Deadwood Dick Junior, is a suspicious character, and the namesake of a noted outlaw!"

"That don't go far. He might be the brother of a family of murderers and yet be an angel!"

"Bah! Why parley? It is your business to make the arrest, if I prefer the charge, so let's waste no more time. I've every confidence that the arrest of the chap will be the means of throwing more light on the subject of the robbery!"

Hube Hardgag pulled lazily at his mustache, and glanced at the clock over the bar.

"I don't know as there is anything compulsory about my arresting the chap without a warrant!" he drawled—"not until some personal evidence is given that he was seen to commit a crime within the scope of my jurisdiction!"

McMichael uttered an impatient oath.

"You appear inclined to be unusually bull-headed!" he growled. "I want the fellow arrested, at once, warrant or no warrant!"

"Well, how much is it worth to you to have him jugged?" Hardgag demanded. "I ain't exactly over anxious to tackle any heavy-weight jobs, this eve, but if your inducements are sufficiently tempting, I may find it convenient to accommodate you!"

"I'll give you ten dollars!"

"Pooh! I can make ten over at the faro-table, on the turning of a card! Nothing, whatever, short of a hundred will budge me!"

"A hundred it is, then!"

"Give us your cash, beforehand!"

The broker took a roll of bills from his pocket, and counted out the sum, on the table.

Hardgag pocketed it, and arose.

"You'd better stay here, till I collar the chap. He might show fight, if he were to see you!"

McMichael nodded assent, although somewhat loth to remain behind. He wanted to be sure

the sheriff did the job for which the one hundred dollars had been given.

Hardgag then left the Keno Club, and made his way leisurely toward Bertha's little eating-house, so as to attract no especial notice from the crowd.

As he stepped upon the threshold of the establishment, Bertha, who was talking with Dick, gave a quick cry of—

"Sheriff Hardgag!"

Instantly Dick whipped a pair of revolvers from his belt, and leveled them directed at Hardgag, who had neglected to take the precaution of drawing his own tools.

"Stand!" Dick cried, sternly, "for you will observe that I have got the drop on you. What do you want, here?"

"I want you!" Hardgag growled. "Drop them guns!"

"Nary time, sir! What do you want of me?"

"I've got an order to arrest ye for robbery and murder, Mr. Deadwood Dick, Junior!"

"Robbery and murder?"

"Yes. It's you who murdered Owen Megargee!"

"You're a liar! I never heard of such a person!"

"Can't help that! Ye killed him, just the same. So put up yer pop-guns, and surrender without any parley or palaver!"

"Not if I know myself, I won't!"

"Ye won't, hey?" roared Hardgag, getting mad because he could see no chance of getting at the chap.

"Never!"

"Then, I'll take you!"

"Try it on. I defy you to take me—ay! you, and all of Deadwood along with you!"

And as he uttered the word, the young detective's eyes flashed dangerously, and his voice rung with the sternness of resolve!

CHAPTER V.

RESCUED BY—WHOM?

THE declaration of Deadwood Dick, Junior, was certainly a rather daring one, single-handed as he was.

To have defied the sheriff, alone, would not have been so much, for Dick certainly had the drop on him; but one man, never could hope to hold at bay a populace like that of deadwood, unless gifted with superhuman powers.

Hube Hardgag glared at the presumptuous young stranger in commingled surprise and contempt, as he heard the defiant challenge.

"So ye won't surrender, hey?" he growled.

"No, I won't! I am guilty of no act that should warrant my surrendering to you, and so I won't surrender!"

"You'd better not fool wi' me, young feller, for I ain't no man to stand trifling. Either you surrender, peaceably, or I'll call in a crowd, and have you shot down in your tracks. I'll have you understand I'm sheriff, 'round these parts, and I won't have no monkeyin'!"

"It will be worth your life to make a signal for assistance!" Dick cried, sternly. "You'll find you've got hold of the wrong chap to bulldoze, this time. I came here to mind my own business, and as a citizen propose to protect myself from insult. I won't surrender to arrest. So what do you propose to do about it?"

Just what he was to do, under the circumstances, Hardgag did not know. To retire meant disgrace; besides, he was not sure but what the flashing-eyed detective would shoot, if he made an attempt to retreat.

He was in a peculiar fix.

Circumstances were in his favor, however, and relief came in a way unexpected by either him or Dick.

Bertha Barlow suddenly reached forward as she stood near the young adventurer, and laid firm hold of his wrists, thereby drawing his aim away from the sheriff.

"Now's your time, Mr. Hardgag!" she cried, quickly.

The sheriff saw his opportunity, and lost not a second in improving it, but leaped quickly forward, and by a powerful effort wrenched the weapons from Dick's grasp, and placed their muzzles at his temple.

"Ho! ho! You won't surrender, hey?" he roared. "Waal, I reckon you will! Budge an inch, and I'll blow your brains out quicker and scat. Bertha, just step to the door and call for help!"

Bertha obeyed, and in a moment two miners entered who held Dick, Junior, while Hardgag clapped the darbies about his wrists.

Despite his declaration of defiance a few minutes before, Dick was powerless to resist, and was made a prisoner!

"So ye defy me and all o' Deadwood, do ye?" the sheriff cried. "Ye thort ye hed come heur ter run ther camp like yer namesake used to do, hey? Well, I reckon you've changed your opinion by this time!"

"Nary a bit," Dick replied, with the utmost nonchalance. "Because you've got the bracelets on me in no wise signifies that I give in. You'd never 've taken me alive but for the treachery of this girl, who but a short time ago I befriended."

Here Dick flashed a withering glance at Bertha, who had retreated behind the counter, and looked decidedly pale and ill at ease.

She, however, made no retort to his accusation.

"Oh, it don't matter how we got you—we've got ye, just the same," Hardgag muttered; "an' after to-night I opine you'll change lodgings. Judge Lynch will handle ye first, and then you'll pass into a warmer sphere, where, maybe you'll get a job of shovelin' coal to keep the furnaces burnin'!"

"I'm not a bit alarmed on that score, you niggardly cur!" Dick promptly replied. "Like Deadwood Dick of old, I shall yet live to make this camp feel my presence, and you shall be one of the first on the list!"

"Bah! Fetch him along, boyees. We'll shut him up in the calaboose, where there'll be no danger of his getting out!"

And Dick was forced along between the two strong-armed miners, Hardgag striding in front of them with the lofty air of one who had accomplished some phenomenal victory.

Out of the Boston Cheap Restaurant and along the crowded main street they proceeded, causing no little excitement among the spectators; for in answer to their eager inquiries as to what was the matter, Hardgag would invariably reply:

"Oh, we've got Deadwood Dick, Junior, the murderer of Megargee!"

This was enough to set the crowd wild with excitement; and, too, the name of Deadwood Dick served to recall to many exciting memories of the past, when the original Richard literally "made Rome howl" about the Black Hills city.

A noisy crowd followed the prisoner and his captors, and discordant cries filled the air.

With the prospect of a hanging-see, in the near future, it was little wonder the people were all excitement.

The local calaboose or jail, was a substantial affair, and had been constructed with a view to keeping prisoners in, rather than to let them become heroes, by escaping.

Once a person was incarcerated within one of its cells, he had no better prospect of getting out than if confined in an Eastern prison, unless he was well provided with tools—which he certainly was not.

When the jail was reached, it was unlocked by Hardgag, and Dick was conducted to one of the gloomy compartments, and locked in.

The sheriff and two miners then left the jail, and secured it for the night, and Dick was left alone in darkness.

The handcuffs had not been removed from his wrists, and hence he well knew it would be impossible for him to escape without outside aid.

And who was there, in all Deadwood, who would come to his assistance?

He groped his way to the wooden bench that comprised the only furniture of the place, and sat down to consider.

There was but one person in all the world, whom he knew as a friend, who would be in the least likely to visit the Black Hills metropolis, and learn of his incarceration.

This person was Old Avalanche, the Great Annihilator, whom he had left a few days previously, in a small settlement fifty miles south of Deadwood, but there was little probability that the veteran would come north for a month yet.

So, the situation looked most gloomy.

As Dick understood it, he had been arrested on the charge of robbery and murder.

What were the particulars of the crime with which he was charged, he had no means of knowing; but, at least he knew enough and had heard enough of Deadwood to realize that, if he were brought to trial, public opinion would side against him, on account of his bearing the title he did, and he would be convicted, even though not guilty.

"Well, I'm in for it, and I suppose there's no use of crying over spilled milk," he muttered. "I wish, however, that I had winged that sheriff, and slid out. I would, too, if I had thought the Barlow girl would turn on me the way she did. Confound it, I can't understand about her. She appeared mighty grateful to me, because I

prevented that ruffian, Slob, from turning her out of doors. And, by conversing with her, I found her a right sensible and go-ahead little person.

"But, I'll be hanged if she is, the way she turned on me. She can set up good biscuit, but I'll be jiggered if I want any more of 'em."

"Heigh! hum! I suppose to-morrow I will be hauled up before some sort of a hastily manufactured court of justice, told that I robbed and murdered Mr. So-and-So, and sentenced to be hanged by that venerable gentleman, Judge Lynch, or some other equally obnoxious cuss, like Hardgag, for instance. Blame his picture! If I ever get a grip at his windpipe, I'll make it a hard gag for him!"

It was late in the evening when Dick was locked in his cell.

He spent some time in meditation, and then stretched himself out on the bench for a nap, for he had ridden a long distance that day and was much fatigued. So, he speedily fell asleep, but had not been so very long when he felt a touch on his shoulder, and quickly aroused.

The darkness was so intense that he could not see a foot before his face.

"Who is it?" he demanded, moving his manacled hands about in front of him.

"A friend," came the reply, in a voice that sounded but a few feet away. "Are you Deadwood Dick, Junior?"

"Well, what if I am? Yes, I am Deadwood Dick, Junior. Who are you?"

"It don't matter. Did you murder Owen Megargee?"

"No. I never heard of the man until to-night."

"Where did you come from when you came here?"

"The Southwest."

"Alone?"

"Yes; entirely so."

"What was your object in coming here?"

"Simply to see if I could strike a job."

"What at?"

"Most anything that came in my way."

Dick's replies were as terse as his interrogator's inquiries, for he really liked not all this questioning.

"You feel kind of sour at Bertha Barlow for assisting in your arrest, eh?"

"Well, I should say so!"

"You are wrong in so doing."

"How so?"

"Because you are."

"That's an old woman's reason. Explain."

"She had an object."

"Ah! did she?"

"Yes. Had you not been arrested as you were, there'd have been bloodshed."

"Well, I presume there would."

"She foresaw that, and not wishing you to get into any trouble of that kind, helped Hardgag."

"She must have been rather peculiarly interested in me. I fail to see how I am any better off."

"Of course you are. She knew, by your coming to jail, she could get you out, and save you further trouble."

"Indeed! Then, am I to owe my rescue to her?"

"Indirectly. But, you must leave the camp. Your life won't be safe here after this, suspected as you are of having murdered the banker."

"Maybe not. I sha'n't go far away, however."

"Why not?"

"Oh, for reasons of my own!"

"Well, let me tell you you'd better fight shy of being nabbed again. You have an enemy who will spare no money to have you recaptured and hung!"

"Who is he?"

"The business pard of the man who was killed."

"His name?"

"Minturn McMichael."

"Ah! I saw him at the restaurant?"

"Yes!"

"Humph! I'd like to see your face and know who you are."

"Impossible. If you would escape, arise and feel your way to the door of the cell. It is open, as is also the jail door. Go at once!"

"Can't you remove these handcuffs?"

No answer.

"Can't you remove these handcuffs?" repeated Dick.

Still no answer.

With a growl of disappointed curiosity, the prisoner arose and groped his way out of the jail.

In two minutes he was out in the open air!

CHAPTER VI.

YOUNG MEGARGEES.

WHEN Deadwood's people arose the next morning, it was in anticipation of a red-letter day in town, marked by the trial of Deadwood Dick, Jr., for the supposed robbery and murder of Owen Megargee.

Consequently, every one was in a rather excitable mood, and breakfasts were disposed of with more haste than usual, for people were eager to get abroad and learn what was to be learned in regard to the pending trial.

As early as the dawn of day, quite a crowd had collected in the vicinity of the jail, in eager discussion of the probable conviction of the imprisoned (?) murderer.

The doors of the jail were closed, and the structure looked as grim and unfriendly as when Dick had been locked within it, the previous night.

Hube Hardgag made his appearance at the lock-up, equipped with a small loaf of bread and a cup of water, to be given the prisoner.

"What aire you going to do wi' them aire?" queried one of the bystanders.

"Feed the menagerie!" Hube replied, with a gruff laugh. "A tiger likes to eat as well when he's caged as when he's free!"

He entered the jail, but quickly reappeared on the outside.

"By all the devils!" he cried. "Ther cell aire locked just as I left it, last night, but the feller's gone!"

The crowd were loth to believe this declaration, and so one by one, took a look for themselves.

It was true.

The door of the cell Dick Bristol had occupied was locked fast enough; but Dick was gone!

The news spread over town like wildfire, and the excitement was something unprecedented in the new city.

Old miners and citizens who vividly remembered the many daring exploits and marvelous escapes of the original Dick, shook their heads, in a sage manner, and unhesitatingly predicted that a second campaign of outlawry was about to be inaugurated, to the detriment of the city's reputation.

To make matters more interesting, a placard was found posted on a telegraph pole, which contained the following:

"Good-day to you, people of Deadwood. I laugh at bolts and bars, and smile at lead and steel. I have withdrawn, temporarily, from your considerate hospitality, but, rest assured 'Some Day I'll Wander Back Again.' I'll let you know when I come, perhaps, so you can prepare for me a grand reception.
Tearfully yours,
"DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

Which was quite enough, as one of the crowd declared to make the people of Deadwood get right down and howl with righteous indignation, and "howl" they did, until their virgin throats became parched with thirst, and duty demanded that they should resort to the various saloons and "irrigate."

When the news of Dick's escape reached Minturn McMichael his rage was unbounded, and he publicly offered a double reward to the man who should recapture the fugitive.

In addition to this, he had a private interview with John Madden, whom he found taking his ease at the Keno Club.

The detective did not appear to be in the least affected over the news of Deadwood Dick's escape, and his apparent indifference caused a scowl to darken McMichael's brow.

"Well! you seem to be taking it mighty easy!" he said, approaching the detective. "One would suppose, to see you sitting here so unconcerned, that you are not aware what has happened."

"Well, what has happened?"

"Why, that infernal young rascal whom the sheriff arrested last night, has made his escape!"

"Is that so? How did he get out?"

"How the blazes am I to know? He was helped out, most undoubtedly, for both the door of the jail and the cell he was put in, are securely locked. Some one must have duplicate keys."

"So it would seem. So the fellow's really gone, is he?"

"Yes, he's gone. What's to be done about it?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know. Have you set any one to look for him?"

"Yes; everybody's searching high and low for him, and I'm surprised to see you taking matters so unconcerned."

"Oh! are you? Well, if everybody is hunting for your prisoner, they ought to be able to find him without my assistance. I have not been asked to have anything to do in the case yet."

"Indeed! Didn't you come here to Deadwood to work up the case?"

"What case?"

"Why, the case of Owen Megargee, to be sure!"

"I did, sir. I didn't undertake to handle any other case, however, that I am aware of. Because some young fellow chances to break jail, I fail to see just how it is required of me to go skurrying all over the Black Hills country in search of him."

"But the young fellow was the very chap who murdered my partner!"

"Oh! he was, eh?"

"Certainly! It is your duty to recapture him, if you expect to get paid for your services."

"Well, as far as that goes, I am not aware that you and I have come to any understanding in regard to terms. If a hundred paltry dollars is all you expect to pay for a detective's services, I am afraid you will have to look quite a ways for your detective!"

"Indeed! How much do you expect to get, then?"

"Well, I cannot touch the case a cent less than five hundred, and guarantee to give the matter my careful attention?"

"Then let me tell you that the mystery of Megargee's death will never be solved to the tune of five hundred dollars—not if I know myself!"

"I beg to differ with you. I propose to work up the case, and to have my price for it, too."

"Well, that's cool. How do you propose to get it, I'd like to know?"

"Very easily. If you are not enough concerned in finding out the fate of your partner to pay a fair sum, I have no doubt but what his son will be when he arrives."

"Then you expect him here?"

"I do."

"When?"

"Oh! at most any minute. When I left Chicago he announced his intention of following in my wake without delay. So he may arrive tomorrow."

"I hope he will," McMichael declared, "as he may be able to make some suggestion that will throw some light on the fate of his father. In the mean time it shall not be said that I am not as eager as the next one to have the matter cleared. So I have made a standing offer of five hundred dollars for the recapture of this Deadwood Dick, Junior, and further, I will give you five more if you will set to work in dead earnest, working toward the solution of the mystery!"

"Very well, sir. I'm your man, where money talks. You had this Deadwood Dick, Junior, arrested because you suspected his complicity in the murder of your partner?"

"Just so."

"What reason had you for suspecting him?"

"Because he is a suspicious character, bearing the name of a famous outlaw, now dead. His reason for bearing the name must be for no other cause than a spirit of bravado, and it would be just that sort of a rowdy who would have no scruples about committing a crime!"

"Indeed! I can't see that your suspicions against the young man are particularly well founded. There are large chances that he is guiltless. However, it won't do any harm to make sure. I presume if he has been wrongly accused he will come back, and we shall then have an opportunity to nab him again."

"What causes you to think he will be likely to return?"

"Oh, I just took a notion that way, that's all. If he is guiltless, he will most likely have a desire to get square with the man who falsely accused him."

"I did not accuse him to his face, personally," the broker said, quickly, "but sent the sheriff to arrest him. So he can have nothing special against me. If we can succeed in recapturing him we will be all right, and take care he does not escape again, at least until he can have a trial."

"Well, I'll see what I can do in the matter," Madden assured, lighting a cigar and rising. "I have but little hopes that we will hit the right fellow in your Deadwood Dick, Junior, however."

And thus the interview ended.

Several days passed, but without any success, so far as recapturing Deadwood Dick was concerned.

The men who were tempted by the reward to make a search scoured the neighboring country; but, although they found the broken handcuffs that had adorned Dick's wrists on the night of

his escape, they found not the resistless Richard himself. He had as surely vanished as though the earth had opened up and swallowed him, and all efforts to find him proved unavailing.

And in addition to this fact, no light was yet thrown on the mystery of Owen Megargee's disappearance, and people were beginning to believe that the mystery would never be explained.

It was about this time that a new character made her appearance in Deadwood who, to say the least, was an odd one.

Not but what the camp had seen many odd characters, and characters, too, fully as queer as this particular one, but they had mainly come and gone, in Deadwood's earlier days.

The new town had outgrown the pristine period, when females sported about in male attire, until this particular one in question put in an appearance.

Just whether she struck town on foot, by stage, or on horseback, no one appeared to know.

The first that was known of her was that some female in masculine attire had rented a vacant store, centrally located, and moved in; likewise had she hung out a little bluish and white board sign, on which was the inscription:

"MOLL MYSTERY,

Female Detective!"

The curious scrutiny of more than one passer-by, did this sign call forth, and the curiosity of the town became fully aroused, and an intense desire did the people betray to see what kind of a looking person Moll Mystery was.

For the first few days after her arrival, Miss Moll, or Mrs. Moll, as the case might be, did not show herself in public.

The window of her store front was kept heavily curtained, shutting out the gaze of outsiders who hovered about the vicinity early and late.

For if there was anything especially mysterious about the new-comer, as her name seemed to imply, the people of Deadwood wanted to know what the mystery was.

No glimpse of Miss Moll was obtainable, however, until the evening of the third day after her arrival, when she sauntered into the Keno Club Saloon, where games were in full blast.

Although her entrance was made quietly and unassumingly she at once became the center of attraction for the gaze of a hundred pair of curious eyes.

She stood the scrutiny, however, without flinching, or showing any signs of bashfulness.

She was a little over the average height of woman, and possessed of a gracefully molded figure, that showed off to fine advantage, in the neatly-fitting black suit she wore. A biled shirt and stand-up collar, a jaunty silk hat upon her head, and patent-leather Oxfords upon her feet, completed her outfit, with the exception that her right gloved hand carried a massive gold-headed cane, and that her face, with exception of the eyes, was hidden behind the folds of a heavy green veil.

She carried no weapons exposed to view, and mysterious though her name, there was, as a whole, nothing particularly dangerous, or terrifying in her appearance.

She made her way to the bar, and ordered and paid for a drink, without pretending to notice the staring of the crowd.

After "pulling away" the beverage, she sauntered leisurely about among the tables where the games were going on and looked first on one and then another, but addressing no remark to any one.

Finally, after going the rounds, she started to leave the club-room.

Near the door, however, she was intercepted by a gray-bearded man, who confronted her with the low query:

"Excuse me, pray, but are you Moll Mystery, the female detective?"

"I am, sir," was the reply.

"Then, I would like to have an interview with you. My name is Thomas Megargee, of Chicago!"

CHAPTER VII.

MOLL MYSTERY'S SUSPICION.

MOLL MYSTERY simply nodded, at Megargee's introduction of himself, but manifested no particular interest or surprise.

"Well?" she said, interrogatively. "What is it I can do for you, sir?"

"To explain that, it will be necessary for me to have a private interview with you," Megargee replied.

"Very well. Do you know where I live?"

"Yes."

"Then, you may call in half an hour's time. I will be in waiting for you!"

And so saying, she bowed, and retreated from the saloon.

Precisely half an hour later, the man who had announced himself as Thomas Megargee, rapped on the door over which was suspended the "Female Detective's" sign.

The summons was promptly answered, and Megargee was admitted.

The store-room was simply furnished with a rude table and a couple of chairs, from which it appeared that the female detective did not remain there over night.

An oil lamp burned upon the table, and gave forth a good light.

Bidding her visitor be seated, Moll Mystery also took a seat, across the table from him.

"Well, sir, I am prepared to hear what you have to say," she observed, in a matter-of-fact way. "I presume you came in reference to the supposed murder of—"

"My father, Owen Megargee. So you have heard about the matter of his disappearance, have you?"

"Yes, I have heard that such a party started for Deadwood to bring a sum of money here, but has not showed up, as expected."

"Just so. Father set out for here, and came here, for his pocketbook and a piece of his handkerchief were found here, in the street, about the time he should have arrived!"

"Ah! Then, you are thus led to suppose that he was waylaid, robbed and murdered, after his arrival in this place?"

"Waylaid and robbed, most assuredly, else why should his empty pocketbook be found here in the street?"

"You were notified when the pocketbook was found?"

"Yes—by my father's partner, Minturn McMichael. I at once sent a detective here, to investigate the case, and follow in his wake."

"Is he here now?"

"Yes."

"What is his name?"

"John Madden."

"When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday."

"You are in disguise, I take it?"

"Yes."

"Have you consulted with Madden, since you arrived?"

"No."

"Don't know whether he has made any discoveries or not, then?"

"I do not."

"I should suppose he would be the first man you would seek out, on your arrival?"

"Well, to tell the plain unvarnished truth, I prefer to remain *incog.*, until I can, myself, make a few personal observations."

"Your confidence in the detective is not over strong, then?"

"No. That is, I am not sure that he would have many scruples about selling out, if offered a good price."

"Ah! Well, perhaps not. Do I understand that you would like to enlist my services in the case?"

"I do. But, it must not, for the present, be known that I am in Deadwood."

"That need not necessarily be, unless you commit yourself, or Madden recognizes you."

"No danger of his recognizing me, I guess. We never met before I sent him West, that I am aware of, and my disguise is perfect."

"You propose to remain *incog.* from McMichael, then?"

"Yes, from every one, except yourself."

"Very good. Now, what do you expect me to do?"

"I expect you to find my father, dead or alive, and bring the person or persons who assaulted him to justice!" and young Megargee brought his fist down upon the table with a force calculated to give due emphasis to his words.

"Well, do you not expect too much of me?" Moll asked. "I haven't got even a cue to work on yet."

"You must find one. If you are a detective, whoever you may be, you must tax your wits, and find a clew."

"Must and can are words of widely different meanings. However, I can try. In case I clear up the mystery, how much am I to get?"

"You will be at liberty to name your own price, sir—or I could say miss, perhaps."

Moll Mystery laughed, pleasantly.

"Certainly, miss," she hastened to say. "I hope because I go veiled, that you do not take me for a horrid man?"

"If the men are horrid, the women are incor-

rigible," Megargee retorted. "However, that is neither here nor there. You go ahead and figure out the case, and you can command any reasonable price for your services. If my parent has not been killed outright, he has no doubt been held a prisoner, with a view of extorting a ransom. That is my chief hope; for, even though he be found and rescued, the chances are that the money will not be recovered."

"Yes, I presume so. It is more than likely too, that your parent was effectually disposed of by the man or men who attacked him. If their object was robbery, their motto most likely was that dead men tell no tales. How much money did Mr. Megargee start West with?"

"A hundred and ten thousand dollars, besides enough to defray his traveling expenses!"

"Phew! that was a big boodle. What was it intended to be used for?"

"Why you see father got a telegram from his partner here in Deadwood, that he, McMichael, wanted the money to make a purchase in the interests of the firm, of a large tract of mineral land. Father could not conceive what such an exorbitant sum should be wanted for, so he telegraphed that instead of sending the amount by Express, he would bring it in person."

"Ah! Did he suspect that McMichael intended to misapply the money?"

"No, I can't say for positive that he suspected that, because he has never caught the broker in any underhand games. However, a number of Western investments have not turned out profitably, and I suppose father thought it would be judicious to investigate the present case, before putting up for so large a venture."

"Then, he is or was really backing the firm of McMichael & Megargee?"

"In the financial sense of the word, yes. McMichael has literally no wealth that can be converted into ready cash, even though he does hold title papers to some real estate in this section. The money he handles as a broker, belongs for the most part, to the depositors."

"Well, this is some little news, to say the least. It may be that McMichael could explain more about your father's disappearance, than any one else."

"This idea has occurred to me, but I would not like to give public expression to it, until I had some strong and tangible proof that I was right. McMichael is a prominent citizen with considerable authority, and he would bitterly resent any impeachment of his good name and character."

"Perhaps you are right. If we could get the necessary proof against him, however, it would make no odds how much he kicked. He would have to walk right up to the rock the same as any criminal."

"Of course. It would be just as important that he should pay the full penalty of the law as any one else, providing he were guilty. But, at all events, I don't believe it will be policy to go gunning after him too openly, until you are possessed of some tangible evidence against him. He might take a notion to skip for parts unknown, if he became aware that he was suspected."

"Oh, no doubt you are right, in that respect. What I do I shall endeavor to do thoroughly and at the same time, judiciously," Moll assured. "My suspicion, however, is against McMichael, and I shall make him my study. I've one reason to believe that he will pan out more guilt to the square inch than any one else I could suspect."

"What is your cause for this reason?"

"Well, in the first place, you say he sent to your father for the sum of one hundred and ten thousand dollars?"

"Just so."

"Are you sure that was the sum he telegraphed for?"

"Positive. I chanced to open the telegram!"

"Well, he has caused it to be understood, here in Deadwood, that all the money he expected Owen Megargee to bring, was ten thousand!" Moll announced. "Don't that savor of duplicity?—He is my man for the present hunt, I am dead sure."

CHAPTER VIII.

A VILLAIN'S THREAT.

THE residence of Minturn McMichael, was one of the most pretentious in the town. It was well furnished, set down in grounds of tasty arrangement, and was nearly in all respects a model home.

On the afternoon of the interview between Moll Mystery and Thomas Megargee, the broker sat alone on the shady piazza of his residence, idly watching the people who passed by, while he puffed away at a fragrant cigar.

He had been reading, but the paper had fallen to the floor, and a thoughtful, half-scowling expression rested upon his face.

An old man just then came hobbling along the street, depending partially on one crutch, for assistance.

His form was bent and trembling with age, his face thin, pale, and furrowed, and his hair as white as the winter's snow.

His eyes were closed, and it was evident that he was blind. He was clad in garments, which, though not exactly ragged, were much worn.

In under his left arm, he carried an old violin and bow, which he hugged, as though it were an invaluable prize.

This was old Abijah Barlow, the blind beggar of Deadwood, and the father of pretty Bertha, the restaurant-keeper.

Day after day, and evening after evening, it was his wont to saw away on his old fiddle, at some one of the street corners of the town.

Sometimes he would gather quite a little present of money, from charitably-disposed miner or stranger; but then, again, days would sometimes pass when he took in but a few dimes.

Bertha had been able to save up a few quarters at a time until she had enough to open the little restaurant which, as soon as she should get fairly started, had the prospect of paying a living profit.

When old 'Bijah reached the gate in front of the McMichael residence, the voice of the broker arrested his attention.

"Hi! friend Barlow, open the gate there before you, and come in and take a seat on the veranda. I want to have a chat with you."

"What do you want?" the old man demanded, hesitatingly.

"I am Minturn McMichael," the broker replied, "and you are in front of my residence. So come right in."

Accordingly the old musician opened the gate and hobbled up to the piazza, where McMichael gave him a seat in an easy-chair.

"You look warm and tired, Barlow. Shall I get you a glass of wine?" the broker asked, in his pleasantest tone.

"No, thankee, sir," was the reply. "I never allow spiritous liquors to pass my lips. Much 'bliged to you, sir, just the same. I hardly know how to take your sudden and unexpected kindness toward the old blind man."

"Why, I don't know as I have ever been unkind to you, friend Barlow. Indeed, I think I have been quite the reverse, by allowing you to live in the old cabin so long without paying any rent."

"Then, too, there's your daughter's got my store for restaurant, and hasn't paid me a cent of rent yet."

"But she'll pay ye, McMichael, just as soon as she has a chance to earn a little. Ye orter be ashamed to try to drive her out, just when she has only begun to git a little started!"

"Pshaw! I only did that as a little practical joke, because, when I called for the rent, she was saucy to me. I had no idea nor intention of dispossessing her. On the contrary, I propose to deed the store property over to her, in her own name."

"You do, sir? Surely you are joking now. You are simply fooling me!"

"No, I am not. On conditions, I will make your daughter the sole owner of the store."

"On conditions! What are the conditions?"

"These: Bertha must become my wife!"

McMichael said, leaning eagerly forward, and glaring at the blind man intently as he spoke. "Become your wife, sir?" Barlow echoed, in consternation—"my Bertha become *your* wife? Surely, Mint McMichael, you do not know what you are talking about!"

"I do know just what I am talking about, sir. I have watched your daughter grow up to budding womanhood with the keenest of interest, and have learned to love her, and made up my mind to possess her as my wife. I am rich, and can lift both her and you from the lowly positions you now occupy, to one of good social standing and life-long comfort, all of which I am willing to do for the sake of possessing a young and charming bride to grace my home here. Now, then, old man, ain't that fair?"

"No, it's not fair," the beggar declared, decidedly. "You forget that my daughter is but a child yet, while your are old enough to be her father."

"Bah! That can make no difference. Lots of girls marry at a younger age than hers, rest assured of that, and would jump at the chance to get such a home as I offer."

"That may be, sir, but not so with my Bertha. She has not had the first idea of marrying any

one yet, and you would surely be the last person she would choose."

"And why so?"

"Because she would naturally choose one nearer her own age."

"Bosh! nonsense! That won't work. I've set my heart on marrying the girl and she's *got* to marry me whether it suits her fancy or not. It makes no difference whether she's dead in love with me at first or not, not in the least. She'll grow to that afterward, when she gets high living and fine dresses. So you might as well tell her that she's booked to become Mrs. McMichael as soon as I get around to it, and she can be gettin' ready."

"I shall tell her nothing of the sort," the blind man declared, defiantly. "My daughter would not marry you if every hair in your head was hung with diamonds, nor would I permit her to. So let that satisfy you!"

"Will I? Well, I guess not, my beggar friend. You may play independence of me, but it won't do you any good. I'll make your girl my wife in spite of opposition, and whoever makes any effort to thwart my plans, it will be the worse for them."

"Remember that I have proofs that *you* murdered Owen Megargee, and if your daughter don't marry me you die on the gallows. You can go now and think over your prospects."

And, rising, the villain entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.

M'MICHAEL'S ATTACK.

THOMAS MEGARGEES had to allow that things did look suspicious as regards McMichael's statement about the money.

He and Moll Mystery held only a few minutes more of conversation, when he started back toward the hotel.

He had been gone but a few minutes when there came another knock at Moll's door, and on answering the summons she found another man standing outside.

It was Minturn McMichael, dressed in his best suit, and looking really quite attractive.

"You will excuse me for calling at so late an hour," he said, affably, "but I understand that you are a detective."

"That's what my shingle says, and I reckon it must be so!" Moll replied, eying her caller from head to foot critically. "Who are you?"

"I am Minturn McMichael."

"Oh, you are, eh? Well, if you've any business in my line, just enter the calaboose and make that business known."

McMichael accepted the invitation, and was soon seated in the presence of the female detective, who turned on the light at a full head, in order that she might get a good look at her visitor.

"Ahem! I believe you are a new arrival in town," the broker said, by way of opening the conversation.

"Yes, I've been here only a few days."

"Did you come from afar?"

"Not very far."

"Strikes me you selected a poor location to start into the detective business, didn't you?"

"I don't think so. There ought to be as much need of a detective here, as anywhere else. There's rogues enough here, I suspect."

"Maybe. Have you had much experience, as a detective?"

"Oh! yes, enough to know my business, well."

"Then, I infer that you came here with a view of engaging on some *special* case?"

"I did, for a fact."

"Might I inquire what particular one it is?"

"I suppose you might. It's the case of the Government *versus* the murderer or murderers."

"Ah! you represent the Government, then?"

"I certainly do not represent the murderers!" Moll replied, dryly.

"Oh! no, I presume not!" McMichael replied, wincing. "I simply was not aware that the Government had taken any particular interest or action in the case."

"Well, they haven't."

"Then, how do I understand you?"

"Simply that I have taken it upon myself, to represent the Government, in this particular case."

"Ah! just so. Your interest and intended action are purely personal?"

"Just that."

"Why, or rather how was it inspired? Was Mr. Megargee a relative or very dear friend of yours?"

"Oh! no; my interest was inspired simply by the delight I take in running rascals down. I take as much delight in it as I do in eating!"

"Indeed! I should say that was a rather

peculiar, if not remarkable trait of character! Do you have the slightest idea you will be able to accomplish anything?"

"I haven't a doubt but what I shall!"

"Indeed! You are sanguine."

"I never felt more confident of succeeding in a case than I do in this!"

"Well, I hope you will, for it is a most baffling mystery. Perhaps you have already hit upon a clew?"

"Such a thing is not impossible."

"What is your clew, if you have one?"

"I decline to state."

"I'd like to know why? If you possess a clew to a foul crime you do wrong in withholding it from me, who am more interested in the case than you are, or can be."

"I beg to differ with you. So deeply am I interested in the case, that I intend to leave no stone unturned to bring the guilty to justice. Besides, I am working my own case, not yours. If you're aching for pointers, why don't you go to your own detective?"

"How do you know I've got one?"

"I know it—that's enough!"

"It appears to me you know much for a person who has only been in town a couple of days!" growled McMichael, beginning to grow provoked.

"Maybe you think so, but I don't!" was Moll's sharp retort; "and the chances are that Mollie Mystery will know, in a couple of days, more than she does, now!"

"Well, I hope so. You and my man ought to be able to work the enigma out between you, in some way!"

"Your man can hoe his own row; I'll cultivate mine. I am not taking on any partners, at present?"

"You're independent!"

"As a cat in the garret."

"Are you? Well, you can remain so, for all I care. I fail to see where you're going to get your pay for your services."

"Why, from you, of course!" with a merry laugh.

"I guess not much!" McMichael replied, decisively. "I can't afford to pay more than one detective!"

"Oh! well, when I find Owen Megargee, perhaps he will shell out well."

"Then you surmise that you will find Megargee?"

"Certainly I shall!"

"Pshaw! he's dead!"

"How do you know?"

"I don't know!"

"You spoke quite confidently."

"What do you mean?"

"What I said. You spoke as if confident that he was dead."

"See here! Do you mean to insinuate that I know whether he is dead or not?" the broker demanded, with savage mien.

"I simply said you seemed confident."

"What I believe is that Megargee was killed by Deadwood Dick, Junior, who has escaped. I shall continue to believe this until it is proven otherwise."

"Pah! Deadwood Dick had no more to do with the job than I, and you know it, too!"

"There you go insinuating again!" hissed the broker.

"Well, if the boot fits you, put it on, Minturn, put it on!" retorted Moll, rising.

McMichael also arose, his face livid with rage.

"Curse you," he gritted, "I'd knock you down for your insolence if it weren't that I disdain to strike a woman! But, I've half a notion that you're no woman at all, but a man in disguise!"

Moll Mystery broke into a merry peal of laughter, so feminine in tone that a man could not well have uttered it.

"You're a fool!" she told him, point-blank.

"If I wanted to come to Deadwood, and was a man, do you suppose I'd go to the trouble of disguising myself? There is no one here to fear, and therefore would be no need of my hiding my face or identity."

"Will you show me your face?"

"By no means. You have an immense pile of gall to ask it."

McMichael glared at her a moment in silence. His position was such as to give inference that, tiger-like, he was about to spring upon her.

Then he said:

"I suspect who you are, and I mean to find out. If you are the one I suspect, we are deadly enemies, and you are here in this disguise for the purpose of injury to me!"

"Well, who am I?" was the cool query. "If I'm not Moll Mystery, who am I?"

"I'll see for myself!" McMichael cried, and the next instant he rushed upon the female detective with force enough to carry her clean off her feet.

Then they clinched, and a silent but desperate struggle began.

CHAPTER X.

M'MICHAEL MEETS A MASTER.

MINTURN M'MICHAEL, though a powerfully built man, had no intention of a fight with Moll Mystery, but had simply aimed to tear the veil from her face, to discover her identity. But he found himself struggling in the grasp of a person as strong as he.

He tried to free his hands, to tear away the veil, but was neatly tripped, laid out upon his back, and Moll Mystery's right patent-leather boot was planted on his breast, while, at the same instant, her hands contained a pair of gleaming revolvers.

It had all been brought about so quickly that the broker had time to but faintly comprehend what had happened.

Little wonder that he was surprised and mortified!

"Let me up!" McMichael savagely growled, yet making no attempt to free himself. "Let me up, you hussy, or I will murder you!"

"Murder me? Of course you would. You scoundrel, and it would not be your first murder either. As it is if I were to kill you, and tumble you into the street, I doubt if any one would take the trouble to inquire after your assassin!"

"Curses on you! Would you dye your hands in human blood, simply because I attempted to penetrate your disguise?"

"Yes, I have a strong notion to! You are a worthless rascal, at best, and the world will be all the better off without you. Only one thing can deter me from finishing your career, right here and now:—I can't spare you just yet, but you must beg my forgiveness, and swear never to molest me again, nor to cause any one else to try to molest me!"

"I'll see you further, first!" was the savage retort. "I'm no boy to be dictated to by a girl, you'll find!"

"Then you might as well be saying your prayers. I mean business, now! Swear at once or I shoot!" and Moll's finger touched the trigger, as the thoroughly frightened man saw.

"What do I have to say?" he demanded huskily.

"As follows: Dear lady I humbly beg your pardon, for the insult I offered, in attempting to assault you, and I sacredly promise you that no repetition of the offense shall occur, nor will I in any way try to injure you, in the future!"

"And you want me to promise that?" McMichael demanded, glaring at her, incredulously.

"Ay! word for word. Refuse, at the peril of your life!"

"And, if I do so apologize?"

"I will give you just time to get out of my sight! and not a second more. So make your choice. In one minute more I shoot!"

McMichael hesitated no longer, but repeated what Moll Mystery had uttered, word for word.

When he had executed her bidding, Moll Mystery removed her foot from his breast, and said:

"Arise, now! Look to it well that you don't cross my path in the future, as you have done to-night, or I will kill you as I would a rattlesnake! Now go!"

McMichael got clumsily upon his feet, and casting his conqueror a look of bitterest hatred, left the place.

Moll Mystery stood in thoughtful silence for a few minutes after his departure; then she, too, left the room and locked the door after her.

Minturn McMichael was in a fearful rage when he once more got out of the presence of the female detective.

He betook his way slowly toward his own residence, his eyes burning like coals of fire.

"Curses on my infernal luck!" he muttered.

"Everything seems to be going against me. But I am glad of one thing—that I visited the accused detective, otherwise I should not be so well on my guard as I will be henceforth. That she is sharper than lightning is patent; but, worst of all, she suspects that I know something relative to the death of Owen Megargee. Now, that's just what I do not want any one to imagine. It might be all the worse for me. So this meddlesome female, if female she is, must quit the field."

"But is she a woman? She talks and acts

like one, and her laugh is purely feminine. Her strength, however is like that of an athlete, and the ease with which she handled me was simply surprising. If a woman, she is an astonisher!

"I formed the impression, at one time during our interview, that she was the young rascal who calls himself Deadwood Dick, Junior, in disguise, but that can hardly be, for he was far too slender, as I remember him, to possess the prowess of this female Samson."

"Well, anyhow, whoever the woman is, her presence here bodes me no good, and she must be disposed of before she can work me harm. But how?"

This was the question the broker tried to solve as he made his way homeward.

CHAPTER XI.

A MURDEROUS CONSPIRACY.

SEVERAL days passed—days of anxious suspense to at least two of Deadwood's people—to Bertha Barlow, the pretty restaurateur, and to Minturn McMichael, the broker.

Bertha had heard from her blind parent the threat of McMichael, and stood in hourly dread of his appearance to enforce his claim.

She knew him to be a desperate man, who would stop at no subterfuge to accomplish his aims, and she had no doubt he would try to put his threat into execution as soon as circumstances permitted.

What to do under the circumstances she could not decide.

Her father was too infirm to defend her, and she had no particular friends to whom to appeal for advice or protection.

One thought was uppermost in her mind: If she only could see gallant, handsome Dick Bristol, for whom she had conceived a great admiration at their first meeting, she might lay her troubles before him and command his assistance; but, although she watched and was expectant, Richard failed to reappear as the days rolled by.

Old 'Bijah did not go forth any more with his violin, but by Bertha's wish, remained closely about the restaurant, which was rapidly gaining custom, and yielded sufficient profit for the support of Bertha and her father.

The other person whose mind was ill at ease, as before stated, was Minturn McMichael.

Just why he probably knew best himself, but it was evident that he was in fear of some impending blow, for he was nervous and irritable, and had all the appearance of a man who was haunted by the shadow of guilt.

Something new for him, he took to drink, evidently with a view to drown his anxiety, and he grew to watching every one he came in contact with, with an eye of suspicion.

And his fears were not groundless, for one day he received through the post-office the following note:

"MINTURN M'MICHAEL:—You seem uneasy about something, and fearing lest you might take it into your head to try to leave town, I hereby give you warning not to attempt it, as your life will pay the forfeit if you do. Every avenue of escape is guarded by trusty men, and escape is impossible. Orders have been given to shoot you down, if you attempt to escape, and they will be obeyed. If you are guilty, justice shall be done, tho' the heavens fall. (Signed)

"DEADWOOD DICK."

Well he knew that the Nemesis was on his trail.

Debating the pros and cons of his case he concluded to seek the ruffian, Slob, to use him as his agent or tool in his fight with impending fate.

Shanky had succeeded in spending all his money for "liquid lightning," and having been without a drink, for nearly a day, was naturally in rather a disagreeable mood when the broker accosted him, but McMichael came at once to the point.

"Shanky?" he queried, "how much money have you got left out of what I gave you?"

"Nary a red!" was the reply.

"Blowed it all in for Bug-juice, as usual, I suppose?"

"Yas, most on't," was the truthful answer, "and just now am fightin' crazy for a drink."

"Well, if you're willing to tackle a job, I can again help you to all the drinks you can swallow for a week."

"I'm yer man, tooth, toothpick and toe-nail. Jest name yer job, an' ye can consider it done."

"Very well. Now, Slob, I've paid you well for all you've ever done for me, and I never knew you to squeal on me."

"You bet yer boots I never did, neither."

"Then, can I trust you to keep your mouth

shut, in the present case, providing I pay you well?"

"On course ye can. I ain't no squealer. I knows which side o' my bread the oleomargarine aire on."

"Very well; I am glad of it. You stick by me, and you shall have bug-juice by the barrel. Now, as to the case in question, there's a person in my way. Understand?"

"Yas; I guesses with half an eye."

"This person *must* be removed without delay."

"Ke'rect!"

"The person must be found dead in the street—dead beyond all resurrection, and when found dead in the street, a paper must be found pinned to the clothing, containing the following words: 'Thus perish all traitors. Deadwood Dick, Jr.' Understand?"

"Yas. You want to make it appear that ther young cuss did the job?"

"Just so."

"Well, I'm your huckleberry. Who's the corpus?"

"The female detective!"

"What! the gal that togs up man-fashion?"

"Just so. She's the very person you're to put out of the way!"

"Dunno about that, boss. I don't mind doin' up a galoot, so pertikler much, but, when et comes to a woman, it kinder goes ag'in' my natur'! I draw the line at shemales and ladies."

"Nonsense! What does it matter to you, so long as the pay is satisfactory? Besides, it's my private idea this Moll Mystery is no woman at all, but a man in disguise!"

"Ye don't say so!" and Shanky looked his surprise.

"Exactly as I say," the broker went on. "I believe this professed female detective is a man. More than that, I'm of the opinion that you've got a grudge against him as well as I!"

"Ye don't say so! Ye don't mean ter say ye think it's—"

"Deadwood Dick, Junior, and no one else!"

"Thunderation! Then you'd better get some one else ter tackle ther job. I ain't akin' fer no bite of it!"

"Don't be such an infernal coward! It is not necessary to make the attack openly. There are a dozen ways to get the best of a person without attacking him or her, openly!"

"Mebbe thar be. Why don't you tackle the job, yourself?"

"Bah! I want no person's blood on my hands. I hold too high a position to dabble in such work."

"Humph! I opine that a man who plans a murder ain't no better, ner half so good, as the poor cuss he hires to do the job. Howsomever, thet ain't ter this pertic'lar p'int. If ye want ther job did *very* bad, how much will ye pay fer it?"

McMichael eyed his man a moment, searchingly.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do!" he answered finally. "When you have carried out your part successfully, and this Moll Mystery is found dead in the street, you come to me, and I'll pay you five hundred dollars!"

Shanky Slob uttered a prolonged whistle.

"Five hundred, eh? Make it a thousand, and I'm your man!"

"No! Not one farthing over five hundred!"

"An' you'll give it to me, sure, without no monkey business?"

"You shall have it *sure*!"

"How much will ye give a feller down, ter bind the bargain?"

"Not a penny. When the job is done your money will be ready for you. My word is sufficient!"

"But, I orter have a little bug, to brace up my narves on. I'm as narvous as a live eel in a fryin'pan!"

"Not a cent. If you want whisky you must use your own wits to get it. You do the job, as I have outlined, and your pay will be ready, on demand."

"Sposin' I fail?"

"Then you get no pay!"

"Waal, you kin bet your boots I don't fail, then. Where's ther paper I'm ter fix on the stiff?"

"You can write that out yourself!"

"Nixee! I can't write no more than ther end uv a dorg's tail can speak Dutch."

McMichael hesitated a moment, then, taking a slip of paper and a pencil from his pocket, wrote out the notice that was to be attached to Moll Mystery's clothing, after she was dead.

"There, put that in your pocket, and be careful not to lose it!" he said. "When will you tackle the job?"

"To-night!" Slob assured, as he transferred the paper to an inner pocket.

"Very well. Make sure you do the work effectively but cautiously, and perhaps I may pay you even better than I have offered!"

"Oh! you bet I'll do the biz up brown!" and Slob uttered a diabolical chuckle.

Then, the two men separated.

"If all works well, the accursed female detective will be out of my way, by to-morrow!" the villainous broker muttered, "and then I shall breathe freer. I can manage Madden much better than I could the infernal woman. Madden would sell out, if needs be, but not so with the female. She's too good to live!" and he went his way seemingly well content with his arrangement.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK MATERIALIZES.

WHEN not at the little restaurant, 'Bijah Barlow and his pretty daughter were to be found in the little log cabin, on the outskirts of the town, which for some time had been their home.

This cabin belonged to Minturn McMichael, but as the place was scarcely habitable, at the time the Barlows arrived in Deadwood, they had succeeded in obtaining permission from the broker, to occupy it, rent free.

Since that time Bertha's active hands had cleaned and fixed it up to such an extent that she had transformed it into a really cosy little home.

Not only had she adorned its interior with numerous little home-like devices, pleasant evidence of a woman's handiwork, but she had also built a neat little rustic fence around it, inclosing a tastily kept flower and vegetable garden.

Clinging vines wreathed the doorway and windows, and with Bertha as the bright particular presence, a cosier nest it would have been hard to find, in Deadwood.

The day succeeding that on which Minturn McMichael made the most vile and wicked compact with Shanky Slob, was Sunday, and while, so far as Deadwood was concerned, it was the liveliest in the week, the Boston Cheap Restaurant was closed to patronage and its fair proprietress and her father were spending the Sabbath quietly at their cabin home.

While 'Bijah read the scripture from a blind-man's Bible, Bertha bustled about, attending to her many little household duties, among other things preparing the family dinner, which she ever strove to make the best meal of the week.

With plenty of good things from her own garden, at command, it was little wonder that most delicious odors filled the cabin.

It was a bright, warm day, and the doors and windows were open, letting in the music of the birds and humming insects.

The cabin was so remote from the main body of the camp that none of the noises of revelry reached it; consequently a sense of rural Sabbath quietude surrounded it.

Attired in a pretty pink gingham dress, and with her cheeks flushed rosy, Bertha was unconscious as she flitted about, that she was watched by a pair of admiring eyes.

Nor was she aware of the fact until a straight stalwart figure darkened the doorway, and she looked up, with a startled little cry, to behold the very person whom her thoughts were upon a moment before—Deadwood Dick, Jr!

Yes, it was indeed the dashing young Western detective, looking every bit as brave, handsome and manly, as when she had first seen him.

"Why, Mr. Bristol!" she exclaimed. "How you startled me!"

"Did I?" he replied, with a pleasant laugh.

"Well, perhaps I did. I've been watching you for several minutes, through the vines, at the window, and such a pretty picture you made that I could not resist the temptation to make my presence known. But, perhaps I intrude?"

"Not at all, sir. Pray come in and be seated, unless—unless you are afraid of being discovered, sir."

"I have no fears of that—no fears, in fact, even if I were discovered, though of course I would not care to be found here, on your account. There is no danger, however, as I made a careful reconnoissance of the neighborhood before I ventured to make my presence known!"

And so saying Dick helped himself to a seat.

"Who is it, Bertha?" old 'Bijah queried, looking up from his Bible.

"This is Mr. Bristol, father," Bertha replied—"the young gentleman who befriended me at the restaurant, when Shanky Slob came to put

me out, and the same who was falsely accused and arrested at the instigation of Minturn McMichael, for the supposed murder of Owen Megargee!"

"Young man, I thank you, for befriending my child," the blind man said; "but, are you not afraid to boldly enter Deadwood, since a verdict of guilt has been publicly declared against you, and a large reward offered for your arrest? You know Minturn McMichael is a powerful man, and he is your enemy!"

"I care not for him, were he a hundred times my enemy!" Dick replied. "He is a contemptible scoundrel, and I mean to get square with him, before I leave the Black Hills. I didn't know but what he might have been offering you some more molestation, and so I thought I'd drop around and make inquiry."

"It is very good of you to take so much interest in us, I am sure," Bertha said, "and we are very grateful. Mr. McMichael has not personally molested us, but he has threatened us!"

"Yes, he has threatened us, like the wretch he is," 'Bijah added.

"Indeed? Tell me about it," and Dick betrayed the interest he felt.

'Bijah complied with the request, relating quite precisely the substance of his interview with McMichael, at the latter's house.

Dick listened until the old man had finished; then he said:

"So that's the scoundrel's game, is it? Well, he is even a greater wretch than I suspected. Don't let his threat frighten you, however, for I don't think he will dare carry it into execution!"

"You don't know the man, stranger. He is devoid of all mercy or principle!" 'Bijah declared.

"That may be. But, at present, there are two or three detectives in town, working on the Megargee case, and if I mistake not, they find some pretty good reasons for suspecting McMichael, himself!"

"Then, that makes the prospect all the more likely that he will try to settle the crime upon father, the same as he did you!" Bertha said, anxiously.

"Well, in case he should do so, you have a remedy at command, Miss Barlow."

"What is it, sir? Pray tell me?"

"Why, marry him, to be sure!"

A look of unutterable loathing and horror filled Bertha's pretty eyes.

"Marry that monster!" she gasped. "Why, sir, I would take my own life, before I'd ever think of such a thing!"

Dick laughed, heartily.

"Well! I thought as much!" he said. "McMichael is not exactly the style of a man that a pure young lady like yourself, would naturally take to. There is no doubt in my mind but what he is a villain, and he may attempt to carry out his threat against you, providing he cannot lay hands on me. If he does, there is but one thing for Mr. Barlow to do—that is, to offer no resistance, but go peacefully to jail, absurd as the charge is."

"But, sir, that would be about the same thing as acknowledging his guilt, and they would hang him," Bertha declared, in distress.

"Not the least likelihood of that. Once he is lodged in jail, he would be likely to remain there over one night, at the shortest. During that time his rescue, of course, could be effected."

"How?"

"You ought to be best able to answer that question, as I understand it was at your bidding that I myself was rescued. Why shouldn't the person who released me from confinement be able to serve her own father the same good turn?"

"Because, sir, it was my father who released you. He has duplicate keys to the jail which he found when we first came to Deadwood."

"Ah! then it will be easy enough to release him. Give me the keys, and if either of you are locked up I will see that you have your liberty."

"But even then, sir, we should not know what to do. We have no money to travel on, if forced to leave."

"Fear not. If worst comes to worst, I can provide you with a safe retreat, until the preposterous charge made against you can be proven false. I am in hopes, however, that you will not be troubled as you anticipate. If McMichael does make the attack, however, I'll guarantee to supply the side-show with a great attraction, and don't you forget it. He stands in great fear of me, and I shall keep him in that state of mind."

After a short further conversation, Bertha

laid the table for dinner, and Dick was pressed to remain and partake of the repast, which was most inviting.

To this he finally consented, but first carefully disguised himself in a reddish, shaggy beard.

There was scarcely any need of this precaution, however, for no one came near the cabin while Dick remained.

Shortly after dinner he took leave of the Barlows, assuring them that he would keep a weather-eye out for their welfare and security.

CHAPTER XIII.

MADDEN SHOWS HIS HAND.

THE next day, Monday, was ushered in with a sensational discovery.

Since his coming to Deadwood it had been the rule of Detective Madden to arise by day-break, and take a morning walk of a mile or more.

It chanced that he usually was the first man abroad in the camp, and it so happened on this particular Monday morning. No one was astir on the street when he left the hotel for his morning stroll.

As he took his way along the silent main street, the Pinkerton man lit a cigar, and while he smoked and walked, appeared buried in deep thought.

So abstracted was he that he paid little heed to his surroundings, so almost stumbled over the body of a man which lay stretched out across the walk.

"Hello! what the blazes! Lying here drunk?" he cried, spurning the body with his foot.

Then he made the discovery that the man was wounded.

There was an ugly bullet-hole in his forehead, around which the blood was coagulated, making a ghastly sight.

And this man was none other than Shanky Slob, the tough.

Had he been tackling some one, and met the wrong man?

A slight moan escaped him when Madden stirred him with his foot. But he did not open his eyes, nor move.

Madden had seen him several times before, and learned something of his reputation as a tough.

"I reckon he's been tackling a man with a memory," the detective inferred. "Is it worth while to pay any attention to him, or not?"

He had a flask of liquor in his pocket, and after debating a few seconds, he drew it forth, and poured a little of the spirits between Slob's parched lips.

The effect was magical.

As the liquor ran down the man's throat, he gave a convulsive shudder, and opened his eyes, which were bloodshot, and had a glassy stare.

He made an effort to speak, but, apparently, he had lost the use of his tongue, as he made only a faint inarticulate sound.

Seeing this, Madden gave him more of the liquor, and asked:

"Who shot you, my man?"

"It's all right!" Slob replied, with another effort. "I'm done for, an' et serves me right. 'Tain't no use tryin' ter do anything for me, boss, 'cause I've got ter peter out and I might as well die right here with my boots on!"

"But, who gave you the bullet in your head? Don't you know that?"

"Yas, I know, but 'tain't no use o' my squeal-in' fer it served me right. I was hired ter kill a person, an' should ha' done it, only I found the party considerably at home—too much so for my benefit. I tried to do him, but were short o' my mark, and he did me. So et ain't no use o' puttin' him to any trouble about it!"

"But, it will do no harm to tell the person's name?"

"No, nor it won't do no good. I'm done for, and that's all there is of it!"

"Who hired you to kill the person, then?"

"Oh! that was McMichael. He wanted the party out of the way, and hired me to do the job. He orter have the dose, instead of me!"

"Then he hired you to commit a cold-blooded murder, did he?"

"Yas, that's the clean skin truth."

"The scoundrel! I can guess, now, who the party was whom you attacked!"

"Oh! can you?"

"Yes. It was Moll Mystery!"

Slob made no denial, but closed his eyes for a moment, wearily.

"I'm gettin' mighty weak," he said, a moment later, "and can't hold out much longer. Give me another swaller o' that whisky. 'Tain't likely I'll git any of the stuff where I'm goin'!"

Madden hastened to comply.

"Tell me!" he said, when he had administered the stimulant, "do you know anything against Minturn McMichael, in relation to the murder of Owen Megargee?"

Shanky shook his head.

"No, I don't," he replied, "'cept one thing."

"What is that?"

"Waal, McMichael is skeert of Moll Mystery, the gal detective, and wanted her put out o' the way. I reckon he was afeard she'd make things too lively for him. That's all I know, more'n that I expect he had more to do wi' puttin' Megargee out o' the way, than any one else!"

At this point, the man was seized with a fit of choking, and expired during one of the paroxysms.

Before leaving his body, Madden searched his pockets, and found the scrap of paper which McMichael had prepared to have pinned to the remains of Moll Mystery, when she should have been killed by Slob.

Madden could not divine its exact significance, but he made up his mind to leave it upon Shanky's body, as he had found it.

Doing this, he continued on his morning walk, leaving the corpse where it was.

By the time he returned to the town, the body had been discovered, and removed to the house of a miner, and the town was in an uproar, over the discovery.

The scrap of paper was found and caused immediate confirmation of the public impression that Deadwood Dick Junior was the murderer.

One man, however, knew the truth and that man was Minturn McMichael—knew that Slob had made an attack on Moll Mystery, and that she had killed him in self-defense.

But, he took good care to keep this fact to himself.

Slob was dead, and in truth he was glad of it, but sorry the ruffian had not first succeeded in killing Moll Mystery, and knowing that she was guilty would gladly have attempted her arrest, only that he would have to betray a previous knowledge of the crime before he could arrest her—which, of course, he did not feel disposed to do.

While the people were astir with excitement over the murder, McMichael kept closely to his house, and it was here that John Madden found him, later in the day.

The expression on Madden's face, when he entered the presence of the broker, caused the latter to gaze at him, inquiringly—an expression partly of triumph and partly of dissatisfaction.

"Well, what is the news?" McMichael asked, when the detective had helped himself to a seat.

"None that is very encouraging to you," was the quiet answer, as the detective looked his man straight in the face.

"Indeed!" and McMichael betrayed surprise.

"What do you mean, by that?"

"I mean that I have found out who murdered Owen Megargee!" Madden replied.

"Jerusalem! You don't tell me! Who is the man?"

"It is not necessary that I should speak his name publicly, until I see if he desires to make terms with me!" was the significant response.

At which the broker's face grew dark with passion.

"If I thought you were hinting your insinuations at me, I'd kill you," he fiercely spoke.

"Bah! I fear not for that," Madden replied.

"I am always prepared for emergencies. So do not think to frighten me or to bluff me, for neither will work."

"Do you mean, sir, to charge me with having anything to do with Megargee's disappearance?"

"I did not say so, in so many words. I said, I need not necessarily speak the guilty man's name in public, until I saw whether he wanted to make terms or not! If you are in a humor to talk business we can perhaps arrange matters to our mutual satisfaction."

"We perhaps cannot. I see through your game, sir, clear as day. You think that, by indirectly accusing me of a crime I never committed, you can frighten me into paying you hush money. To convince you that you can do nothing of the sort, I will politely inform you that you are no longer in my employ!"

Madden laughed, coolly.

"Very well," he replied. "That settles it, then. I now do accuse you of the murder of Owen Megargee, and shall take great pleasure in locking you up. Will you surrender?"

"No, sir, I will not!"

"Oh! well, suit yourself. I can wait, and now, listen to me, Minturn McMichael. I do not care to arrest you. I have plenty of evidence on which to make the arrest, but if you use me as a brother and share the swag with me, I will

stand in with you, as your protector, and save your neck from the gallows!"

"Bah! I'm in no danger of the gallows! I have no connection with any crime and have nothing to fear."

"You know better. Your guilty looks give the lie to your words. But I have proof of your guilt—positive, damning proof that settles the case against you."

"Nonsense! I know better. There is not one single reason in the world why I should be even suspected. Name one, if you can!"

"I could name a dozen if I chose, and so can the other detectives, who are prepared to nab you the first step you take out of the camp. I don't propose to give you my proofs of your guilt, but will mention a couple of clues that the other detectives are working upon."

"What other detectives?"

"Moll Mystery, for one, and another man, in disguise, who has twice visited her, as I suspect, in reference to this case. He is registered at the hotel as William Lee. His real name, I suspect, is Tom Megargee!"

"Pshaw! If my partner's son were to come here, I would be the first person he would come to see."

"That is not probable, as I know before I left Chicago he expressed suspicions of you, and declared his intention of giving the matter his attention."

"Nevertheless, he would not suspect me, when he knows that I have always been honest in all my dealings with his father."

"I doubt if he takes any more stock in your self-asserted honesty than I do!"

"What reason have you for doubting my honesty?"

"A very good one. Before I left the East, I ascertained for my own satisfaction the exact amount of money you sent to Chicago for!"

McMichael winced.

"Oh! did you?" he asked, sarcastically.

"I did!"

"Well, how much did I send for?"

"One hundred and ten thousand dollars!"

"Tis false! I sent for but ten thousand!"

"Bah! It is useless for you to lie to me. I know whereof I speak. The amount was so large that Megargee hadn't confidence in you, and with the money, started in person to learn what you proposed to do with such a big sum!"

"I repeat that it is false. I only sent for ten thousand; that is all I expected, or wanted!"

"To prove that you lie, I visited the local telegraph office, and inquired what amount you sent for. I asked for my information of a young man named Gus Thornton, who received of you the message you wanted sent. He hesitated at first—had evidently been paid not to answer that question—but, when I showed him my badge and slipped him a note, he produced the original message you had written out, requesting Owen Megargee to send you one hundred and ten thousand dollars at once, to assist you in purchasing a valuable tract of mineral land. Thornton also told me that both Moll Mystery and the man who registers as William Lee had called to see the telegram. So that proves that they are working out your trail as well as I. Ah! McMichael, you might as well own up and save your neck by coming to terms, for if you don't I'll land you in jail as sure as my name is John Madden!" and the Pinkerton man brought his hand down on the table with a force that indicated earnestness, to say the least.

McMichael eyed him as a tiger might its prey, upon which it was about to spring.

He did not seem satisfied, hardly, of Madden's earnestness; he did not doubt but what the detective had visited the telegraph office, and learned about the message; but what else had he learned? Anything to give a solid foundation upon which to make an arrest?

"There's another thing that will go hard with you," Madden went on. "Before he expired, this morning, I saw and talked with Shanky Slob, the man you hired to kill Moll Mystery. I got his dying confession. So there is no doubt but what you will hang, unless you go halves with me."

"How do you mean?"

"You robbed Owen Megargee of one hundred and ten thousand dollars. For one-half of that amount you can save your life, and have plenty to live on elsewhere."

"Explain. If I am suspected by the other detectives, as well as by you, what will your withdrawal benefit me?"

"Well, I'll tell you: I've not been keeping informed for nothing. I know that you do not stir outside of this house but what you are watched. If you were to attempt to leave town, you would be stopped and arrested. The

party who is watching you, or at least causing you to be watched, is Deadwood Dick, Junior, the young man you had arrested for murder. I have reason to believe he meant to get square with you, by watching lest you escape, and being in with Moll Mystery and Tom Megargee, he will eventually bring enough evidence against you to hang you."

Then he added:

"Being unable to fly with your ill-gotten booty, it is only a matter of a short time when you must succumb to them, even were I out of the way, which I am not, until we become friends."

"Once that is settled, I will guarantee that you will not be molested, and the real murderer of Owen Megargee will escape well-deserved punishment."

"Supposing, not by any means acknowledging that I am guilty, that I were to listen to your argument, how would you go to work to protect me from annoyance?"

"Well, in the first place, I would play my cards so as to get this Deadwood Dick, Junior, this Moll Mystery, and this man whom I suspect to be Tom Megargee, into custody."

"And make way with them?"

"Oh! no. I want no murder on my hands. I should hold them prisoners until we could select, try and prove guilty some other party. Then, after we had had ample time to fly to parts unknown, they could be released. Once the boodle is divided, I am sure I don't care what becomes of them. If you did not care to go to foreign climes, you could stay, for if one person was convicted for the murder of Megargee, that would clear your skirts, and you would not be apt to be bothered. However, it would be safer for you to go abroad for awhile."

"And if I refuse to make any terms with you whatever?"

"Then you will spend to-night in the jail, with a prospect of being dragged out by a band of Regulators, and strung up to the first convenient limb. The choice is open to you. Take the prospect that suits you best!"

And, tipping back in his chair, Madden surveyed his man with a cool, patronizing smile.

CHAPTER XIV.

TERMS MADE.

JOHN MADDEN had announced his terms, and it was for Minturn McMichael to accept, or decline to surrender, according as he might decide.

It would cost him the large sum of fifty-five thousand dollars to surrender; it would cost him his liberty and probably his life to refuse.

Madden's demeanor, while dictating terms, was that of a man whose purpose was fixed and implacable.

McMichael, though he valued money highly for the mere comfort and enjoyment he got by its use, yet would have sacrificed every cent he had in the world rather than undergo an hour's imprisonment.

But, even though he should be forced to this avaricious detective's terms, he decidedly would not acknowledge any such crime as that of which he was accused.

"Well," he said, finally, "it would seem that I am the victim of a foul conspiracy. Little did I think when I sent for a detective to investigate the mystery of my esteemed partner's fate that I should be accused and made the victim of a blackmailing extortionist!"

Madden uttered a dry, hard laugh.

"Good speech, that," he said, "even though it don't amount to much, so far as I am concerned. Call me extortionist if it suits your convenience, it don't hurt my feelings in the least. In fact, I rather like the insinuation, and shall fancy it still more when it becomes a reality rather than a presumption."

"You are a grasping leech, and I've a mind to hand you over to the law. But for the fact that I abhor being arrested, I'd never give you a penny. My name is too fair and unsullied to become the target for public slander and the scandal of ruffians."

"Then you propose to give in, do you?"

"Rather than face the disgrace I suppose I must. But, remember it is not because I am guilty or fear conviction. I never committed such a crime as murder or robbery, and I only yield to your demands to avert an accusation. That would break my heart and bring shame to the cheek of my daughter!"

"Oh, well, as long as you pay the price of your liberty I don't care a picayune whether you own up your guilt or not." Madden assured, complacently. "Fifty-five thousand dollars will quiet all my conscientious scruples so far as your sins are concerned."

"Great Heaven! fifty-five thousand dollars, man, to shut up your infernal tongue! It's a shame and an outrage beyond parallel. It will sweep every cent of my hard earnings, and my child and I will be reduced to poverty."

"Can't help that," Madden declared, mercilessly. "It will do you good to be poor awhile. You will have a chance to learn the experiences of other mortals; but, bah! it is sheer nonsense to talk in that strain, for, after paying me, you will have an equal amount, as well you know. So there is no need of preaching on that theme any longer. Pay the money, and I will see to it that you are not molested."

"I will do nothing of the sort, until the enemy is in durance vile!" McMichael replied, promptly. "While I come to your terms, regarding the money, I do most positively refuse to pay it over until you show me that you have Deadwood Dick Jr., and Moll Mystery prisoners, as well as Tom Megargee. When you have them prisoners, in a safe place, and turn them over into my charge, I will pay you the sum you demand. No sooner—no later. Those are the only terms you can make with me. Refuse them, if you like. It matters not to me. You can arrest me, or accept my terms, just as you think best. Of course, if I am arrested, you will never get a cent!"

"I won't, eh?" Madden queried, a steely glint entering his eyes.

"Not one cent! Capture these people, who are in my way, and turn them over into my custody, and you shall have the sum you ask, and go whither you please. I will not ask you to bother yourself about arresting and trying to convict any other person. When you execute the work assigned to you, and receive your pay, your business in Deadwood will have been completed!"

This turning of the tables did not appear to strike Madden very favorably.

McMichael's reassurance, and declaration of what he would and what he would not do, was rather a set back to the scheming detective.

"I'm not supposed to bargain with you!" he growled. "I hold the trump hand, and I propose to play it. Either come down with the boodle, or accompany me to jail!" and he arose from the chair, and reached for his hat.

"Lead ahead!" the broker retorted; "I am ready to accompany you when you exhibit a warrant for my arrest!"

"I have no warrant with me, but I have my badge, which is sufficient. Come along!" and he strode toward the door.

McMichael followed with firm step.

When he reached the door, Madden faced about, and surveyed the broker keenly—a disappointed gleam in his eyes.

"So you are really in earnest about surrendering?" he demanded, sullenly.

"I am!" McMichael replied, decisively. "When you accept my terms, I accept yours. Those are my only conditions, under any circumstances!"

Madden reflected a moment sullenly.

"Well," he finally said, "I reckon it will be to my advantage to make the dicker with you. But, what assurance have I, that, after I go to the trouble of securing these three persons, you will keep your promise?"

"My word of honor. If I fail can you not still arrest me?"

"If you do not commit suicide, I suppose I could!"

"You needn't have any fears about that!" McMichael assured. "I'm not such an infernal idiot as all that amounts to."

"Let me see the money I am to receive!"

"Impossible!"

"How so?"

"Because, what money I personally possess, I cannot lay hands on at a moment's notice. Rest assured, however, that all will be forthcoming when you have performed your part!"

"Fifty-five thousand dollars?"

"Exactly."

"And you don't want me to arrest any one and charge them with the murder?"

"No; I have plans as to that, which I propose to perfect myself."

"When I get the three persons into my custody, where shall I take them to?"

"You can let me know, and I will provide a place where I can hold them."

"You must promise me not to kill them."

"I promise nothing!"

"Why not? To kill them would really be to make me a party to it."

"It matters not to you what becomes of them after you turn them over to me, so long as you get paid for your work!"

"Well, you can hold yourself in readiness to square accounts with me to-night," he said.

"You do not expect to have all your game corralled by that time?"

"On the contrary, I do—or at least, shortly after nightfall. So be prepared, as I start eastward immediately after settling with you."

"Very well. As soon as the prisoners are turned over into my custody you shall have your money."

"You bet I'll have it, or woe be to you!" Madden cried, as he departed.

And notwithstanding this implied threat, a strange, most villainous smile lit up the broker's face after his departure—a smile both of animosity and treachery!

CHAPTER XV.

PLAYING A BOLD GAME.

WHEN Madden had left the house, Minturn McMichael entered his bedroom, which adjoined the parlor.

Here he was absent for several minutes, but when he returned to the front room a great change had been wrought in his appearance.

The beard had been cleanly shaven from his face, making him look at least ten years younger, and those who had hitherto known him would scarcely have recognized him now.

He was attired in a rough suit of clothes, stogy boots and a slouch hat—wore a belt containing a knife and revolvers about his waist, and carried a rifle in his hands.

Surveying himself in the mirror, he uttered a low laugh of triumph.

"If Deadwood Dick, Junior, is watching for me now, I reckon he will not recognize me in this rig-out. I will away now, to mature plans for the defeat of John Madden's pretty scheme, and the ridding myself of my three enemies. To-night's work, deadly though it may be, must definitely settle whether I have to fly from Deadwood or not!"

Looking carefully to his weapons, to see that they were in working trim, he lifted and pulled to one side a large rug that occupied the center of the parlor floor.

A patch of bare floor was revealed, in which was a trap-door.

Lifting the trap, a stairway was revealed, which descended into tomb-like darkness below.

This stairway the broker at once descended, drawing the door shut after him.

His feet soon touched the rocky bottom below; then he fumbled around a few minutes in Stygian darkness, after which he produced and lit an ordinary lantern, whose illumination revealed that he was in a box-like cellar.

It was only about eight feet square and solidly masoned up, except in one quarter, where was a dark aperture branching off from the cellar, of sufficient width and height to admit the passage of a man in a standing position.

Aside from this passage and the trap-door overhead, there was no outlet from the cellar.

McMichael entered the passage, the lantern illuminating his way.

The passage ran in an irregular course, was damp and foul-smelling, and finally began to ascend at an easy angle.

In five minutes' walk it came out at the earth's surface, in a thicket which grew on the bank of the noisy creek that babbles through the gulch.

McMichael did not immediately leave the thicket, but crept around from position to position, and made a careful reconnaissance.

Finding no one in the neighborhood, he left the cover and struck a bee-line for the mountain-side, screening himself as much as possible.

Having gained the timber cover, he hurried rapidly in the northward direction, keeping off the course of the stage-road to Custer by only a few yards.

He no longer appeared to have any fear of pursuit, for he seldom looked behind him.

He was a rapid walker, and covered space rapidly, so that when a couple of hours had elapsed he was a goodly distance from Deadwood, at the pinnacle of a small peak which overlooked it.

Here, among a cluster of close-growing pines, was built a hunter's cabin, which probably had been erected as long ago as when the first settlement was made in that section of the Black Hills.

The cabin was overgrown with clinging vines, the windows were boarded up, and the door hung, half-fallen into the cabin, upon one hinge.

Everything about the place indicated that it was seldom, if ever, visited.

Indeed, the ascent of the mountain was of the most tortuous and gloomy sort, and the wonder

was what could have induced any one to erect a habitation in such an out-of-the-way place.

McMichael did not immediately enter the cabin; instead, he sat down at the outer edge of the circle of trees and gazed down upon the town, far below.

His rifle was cocked, ready for use, and it seemed evident that he wanted to make sure he was not followed before entering the cabin.

Fully an hour he kept his vigil; then, having discovered nothing to arouse his suspicions, he arose and entered the lonely retreat.

The interior was filthy and offensive, evidently having been used as the nocturnal abode of mountain birds and animals.

The adobe and stone fireplace had partly caved in, the sight of which fact caused McMichael to utter an exclamation of consternation.

He quickly dropped his rifle and began to remove the displaced stones and mortar.

This was no easy job, for a large number of stones had caved in, and the big fireplace was nearly choked up.

McMichael labored rapidly and excitedly, however, and in ten minutes his efforts were rewarded, when, with an exultant cry, he withdrew from the debris a package about six inches square, which was carefully wrapped in oilcloth.

"By the gods! I was scared when I saw this cave-in!" he gasped, drawing a long breath of relief. "I thought some one had been here and discovered my prize. I must see that the money is all right."

With nervous fingers, he unbound the package, and the contents were exposed to view, consisting of several stacks of greenbacks, of various denominations, but most of them large.

The murderer did not stop to count the money, being satisfied at a glance that it was intact, as he had left it.

He rebound it in the oil-cloth, and then put the package away, in the hunting-sack he wore.

"That will go into a safer hiding-place, when I return to Deadwood!" he muttered. "And, now, for poor Megargee's clothing."

He proceeded, next, to remove the last of the stones from the mouth of the fireplace, and when he had done this, he pried up the big stone-slab that formed the bed on which fire was usually built.

Reaching into the aperture, beneath, he drew out several articles, which evidently had been secreted there.

Among other things was a shirt, covered with blood-stains, a pair of pants, a vest, a coat, a collar and tie, a soft felt hat, and a pair of shoes and stockings.

Each and every article was more or less covered with blood, and the stains were by no means old. Indeed, the blood clots upon the shirt, were some of them still soft, having failed to dry down hard.

A shudder passed over the broker, as he handled the things, and his face grew visibly paler.

He next fished an old army blanket from under the fireplace, and proceeded to wrap the tell-tale garments into a compact bundle.

This done, he placed the bundle under his arm, seized his rifle, and left the lonely cabin to the future occupancy of night-hawks and owls.

He descended the mountain-side, and took his way back to Deadwood, not knowing that, all the way, he was shadowed—dogged, step by step by the one who was destined to be his evil genius.

On reaching the edge of the town, he skirted around the edge of it, until he reached the southern border, where stood the cabin occupied by the Barlows.

At that hour of day, the neighborhood was quite deserted, and the villain's actions were not likely to be noticed by any chance passers-by.

The cabin was closed, and the door locked, Bertha and her father both being at the restaurant.

But, this made no difference to McMichael, for he had a duplicate key to the door lock, and unlocking it, he boldly entered the cabin.

He remained inside but a few minutes; then came out and relocked the door; but he failed, now, to carry the bundle he had brought from the mountains.

He had placed it in Barlow's cellar.

Leaving the cabin, he made his way to his own residence, by the same peculiar way he had left it, and when he once more appeared upon the street he possessed his usual appearance, very well dressed and wearing a soft, glossy

beard that exactly resembled the one he always wore.

Making his way to the hotel, where John Madden was stopping, he found the detective smoking a cigar, upon the piazza.

"Have you done anything, as yet?" he asked.

"Nothing!" Madden replied. "I am trying to form some plan of action. I may not be able to make any particular move, until this evening."

McMichael did not question him any further, but passed around to the rear of the hotel.

Here, several of the employees of the place were seated under the shade of a tree, playing cards, it being mid-afternoon, and they having nothing in particular to do.

Among the lot, was a dark-eyed, rather sinister-looking individual, of thirty years, whose deep brunette-hued skin seemed to indicate that he was not of American birth—probably Spanish.

Motioning to him, the broker led the way toward the same thicket that hid the secret entrance to his house.

When the two were inside this covert, McMichael faced the Spaniard.

"Castro," he said, laying his hand on the other's shoulder, "I have some news for you!"

"News for me, sir?" Castro replied, interrogatively, and in good English.

"Yes. There is a man in town, from Laramie, although he registers from Chicago."

Castro started.

"Who is he?"

"A detective. He is looking for one Jean Corti, whom he believes to be here!"

Castro showed his white teeth, as he uttered a Spanish oath.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"Because, he came to me and made inquiries."

"And you told him?"

"That I knew nothing of such a party."

Castro looked grateful.

"Well?" he interrogated.

"Well, this man said he was not prepared to believe me, but meant to find you—that he expected a confederate here, on the next stage, who knew your face."

"He did?"

"Yes. You are in danger. If they nab you, your goose is cooked, and they will take you back to Laramie, and hang you for your murder there!"

"Sh!" Castro gasped, clutching the other's arm, nervously. "There may be listeners!"

"Pshaw! no. We were not followed!"

"You're not sure. I am in deadly peril!"

"Undoubtedly."

"What am I to do?"

"Light out. I would not like to see you in trouble. How much money have you got?"

"None. I lost the few dollars I had, at poker, last night!"

"I can help you."

"Can you? Will you?"

"On conditions."

"Go on!"

"You must dig out!"

"You bet. I must take to-night's stage!"

"You can do so, if you accept my terms. Do you wait on the table at the hotel, now?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the guest called John Madden?"

"Yes."

"And wait upon him?"

"I do."

"Very well. He is the detective who wants you. He is also a man who holds valuable papers that I want to possess. Now listen! I want him quieted!"

Castro quickly shook his head.

"No more murder for me!" he protested.

"No murder is intended," McMichael said, taking a vial from his pocket. "This bottle contains an irresistible sleeping potion. A few drops of the tasteless stuff in his tea, and he will grow sleepy, seek his room, and sleep soundly until morning. During the night, I want to get the papers he possesses, and, with no danger of his awakening, I can more easily succeed!"

"The stuff is poison," Castro said, taking the bottle and smelling of the contents.

"By no means," the broker quickly replied. "It is simply what I tell you—no more, no less. I am no more eager to have murder on my shoulders than you are. What I want of you is this: I want you to take the bottle, and when you serve Madden with tea at supper to-night, see that three drops of the stuff are in the tea."

After supper, when he is asleep, will be your chance to make your escape from the town, on

the stage. Will you save yourself and do me this favor?"

"What's the pay? I don't exactly believe what you say about the stuff, and I am running great chances of committing another murder!"

"What I have told you about the stuff is perfectly straight. How much do you want to do the job?"

Castro looked at the ground a moment, thoughtfully.

"Would a hundred dollars be too much?" he asked. "With that amount I could get out of this accursed region."

"Promise me faithfully that you will drug Madden's coffee or tea, as I have directed, and I will pay you five hundred. Is it a bargain?"

"You bet! I promise faithfully to do it."

"Good! Fail me, and I will have you arrested. Here is your money. Now we will return toward the hotel."

The broker paid the Spaniard the sum he had agreed to; then the two returned leisurely toward the hotel.

Minturn McMichael was certainly playing a bold and daring game.

If he won, his future stay in Deadwood had no barrier.

If he lost, his chances of ending his career on the gallows were certain.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEGINNING OF THE END.

THE sun of that eventful day, in Deadwood, sunk low toward the dun-hued mountain horizon, and long shadows began to deepen in the more obscure nooks of the landscape.

The sounds of mining life became hushed, and eventide was close at hand.

Thomas Megargee, who was registered at the hotel as William Lee, ended a confidential interview with Detective Moll Mystery, which had lasted some minutes longer than he had intended, and hastened toward the hotel to get his seat at the supper-table—for whoever was not on hand at the sound of the first gong had to wait for the second table and put up with what he could get.

Then, too, Mr. Megargee had another reason for wishing to be early at supper.

His disappointment was great, on entering the dining-room, to find that supper was in progress, and some of the guests were through and leaving the tables.

Among these latter was John Madden, who did not look in the least sleepy.

Mr. Megargee secured an available seat, and proceeded to do justice to what there was in the way of eatables. Indeed, he was rather longer at the repast than usual, but finally having finished, he arose and left the room.

As he entered the hotel office he at once saw that something had happened of unusual moment, for the place was filled with people, and great excitement appeared to prevail.

Eagerly crowding forward, he saw what was the cause of the commotion.

Lying upon his back upon the floor was John Madden, the detective.

His eyes were closed, his limbs rigid, and his face deathly pale.

One at a first glance could but surmise that he was dead.

A physician named Devere, who boarded at the hotel, was kneeling beside the fallen man, and feeling of his pulse.

"Is he dead?" some one queried.

"As dead as a door nail!" assured the doctor. "His heart had already ceased to beat when I reached his side. It's another of those distressingly sad cases of acute heart disease that are becoming so prevalent, of late years. The man no doubt partook too hastily of his supper, and it quickened his death!"

"Hello! what's the matter here?" demanded Minturn McMichael, entering the hotel at this juncture, and pushing his way forward. "Good God! It's Madden! What on earth is the matter, doctor?"

"He is dead!" Devere replied. "He came out from supper, staggered, and fell where you see him, expiring almost instantly. Do you know him, sir?"

"To be sure I do! He lives in Chicago, and is a detective. I employed him to come here and work up the mysterious case about my partner, Owen Megargee. Only this day he discovered who the murderer was, and we were to make the arrest to-night. So the poor fellow is really dead, eh?—you are sure?"

"Certainly. He is already cold."

"Then pick up the body, boys, and bring it to my house. I'll see that his remains are sent home."

Accordingly the body of the detective was carried to the house of the man who had in truth murdered him, then it was laid out in a private room, and a watch placed over it.

This sudden death created a great deal more of excitement than would naturally have been expected, and knots of people gathered in the street to talk over the matter.

Tom Megargee left the hotel, immediately after Madden's body was taken from it, and went hastily to Moll Mystery's place, where, upon knocking, he was admitted.

"Quick! not a moment is to be lost," Megargee said. "Get ready!"

"Why?" she interrogated.

"The worst fears are confirmed. John Madden is stone dead. There is no immediate time for explanation. We must not let Castro escape!"

Moll Mystery made no manifestation of surprise at the startling news, but seized and donned her hat, and buckled about her waist a belt containing half a dozen revolvers.

She then seized a lasso from a hook on the wall, and said:

"You're right. Castro shall not escape. It is our time, now, to work. Come!"

She led the way from the house by a rear door, that opened upon a large lot, unoccupied by habitations.

This lot was grown up with clumps of bushes, and extended along as far as the rear end of the hotel.

Beyond the hotel was a row of houses, that ran in a transverse direction, back to the side of the gulch.

To escape from the hotel by its rear, as he would most likely try to do, Castro would have to pass along in the rear of Moll Mystery's shanty.

Moll and Megargee at once secreted themselves in a clump of bushes that fringed a traveled path, along which Castro would probably come.

Megargee clutched a revolver, ready for use, and Moll Mystery held her lasso in readiness.

For several minutes they eagerly waited for the appearance of the Spaniard, without his coming.

"Perhaps he had already passed before we came out?" Megargee suggested, anxiously.

"That is hardly probable," Moll replied. "For him to immediately leave the hotel would excite suspicion. He will be along yet, I opine."

Her surmise proved correct.

About half an hour after they had become ensconced in the bushes, Castro came skulking along, like the alarmed criminal he was, looking sharply on either side, as if in fear his flight might be discovered.

He was permitted to pass the ambushed foes unmolested; but as soon as he was a few yards past, Moll Mystery stepped quickly from cover and hurled her lasso.

At the same time Megargee sprung out, revolver in hand.

The lasso circled about Castro's head, settled about his waist, pinioning his hands to his side, and jerked him suddenly and forcibly upon his back.

Ere he could arise Megargee was upon him, with the cocked revolver pressed to his temple.

"Not a word, or you are a dead man!" he hissed. "You are our prisoner!"

Castro's fright was so great that he could not speak, and he was so weak with terror that he could make no resisting struggle.

Moll Mystery came to Megargee's aid, and the murderer of John Madden was bound hand and foot.

He was then lifted between his two captors and borne into Moll's shanty.

Moll then locked the door and lit a lamp, while Megargee checked any outcry Castro might attempt to make, at the point of the revolver.

"Castro, you are a murderer!" Moll said, as she stood over the Spaniard. "The drug you put into John Madden's tea killed him dead!"

"I don't know what you mean!" Castro protested. "I put no drug in any one's tea."

"Don't lie! for it won't work. I know all about it. I overheard the interview between you and McMichael, saw him give you the vial of liquid, and pay you five hundred dollars to do the job. So it is useless to make a denial!"

Castro looked more terrified than ever, at this:

"He told me it was only a sleeping drug," he gasped. "If you overheard the interview, you know that he denied it was poison."

"That's all right. You had no business to enter into any such compact. You are not only

Jean Corti, the Laramie murderer but you are now responsible for John Madden's death. The prospects for you, my man, are exceedingly slim."

Castro caught at her words as a drowning man might clutch at a straw.

"Is there the least hope for me?" he eagerly demanded. "If there is, let me know what it is. You know I did not expect or intend to administer poison, and if there is any help for me, I want to know it. If you will give me a show you can have the money—"

"Nonsense! We do not want the money. What we are working for is evidence against McMichael. Of course, you deserve to stretch hemp, but if you will turn evidence against McMichael, we will do all in our power to save your neck."

"Of course, though you turn State's evidence, it will be necessary to place you under arrest. This need not particularly alarm you, as I will see that you have a chance to shake the dirt of this town off your feet. If you refuse to accept of this one chance, you may bet your life your breath won't pollute this world very long!"

"But, if I make an open confession against McMichael, the crowd will take me and string me up!"

"Never fear for that. I have the Government on my side, and plenty of backing. You do the square thing, and I will give you a chance to put distance between you and Deadwood. If you get caught, after that, it's your own lookout!"

"I accept your conditions, then. And, not only can I give evidence against McMichael, as regards the poisoning of Madden, but concerning the murder of Owen Megargee. I saw him do the job, but dared not betray him, as he was rich and powerful, and held the secret of my unfortunate Laramie experience."

"Very well. We want all the evidence you can give against McMichael, and you need have nothing to fear," Moll Mystery said. Then, turning to Megargee, she added:

"Go and make ready! Have no detail neglected. To-night shall end all. McMichael has played a bold hand to win, but he has played right into our hands. For another time Deadwood Dick, Junior, wins!"

Megargee nodded, and rising, left the room.

Moll Mystery remained behind, in company with the captive Spaniard.

Slowly but surely the fatal web was weaving around the broker of Deadwood, and entangling him in its meshes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END.

MINTURN MCMICHAEL, after having the body of John Madden removed to his house, cleared the place of every one except his daughter, servants, and the two miners whom he had hired to sit up with the corpse.

He then also left the house, and took his way toward the heart of the camp, where he met Hube Hardgag, the sheriff.

Hardgag had been drinking, and looked decidedly in an ugly mood—a fact that elated the broker, who knew better how to take the man, perhaps, than any person in the city.

"Are you ready?" the broker demanded.

"I am," was the reply. "It's a dirty, mean thing to do, tho'!"

"That's none of your business, as long as your purse is lined!" was the sharp retort. "Here is the key. Select your men and be off. I will be on the hotel piazza by the time you return."

Hardgag received a key from the broker, and turned abruptly away, without comment.

McMichael took another direction. He went directly to the Boston Cheap Restaurant.

There chanced to be no customers in the place when he entered.

Bertha was busied behind the counter; her father sat in one corner, fixing his violin.

McMichael advanced at once to the counter.

"Good-evening, Miss Bertha!" he saluted.

"Good-evening, sir!" Bertha replied, scarcely looking at him. "Is there anything I can do for you, sir?"

"Well, yes, I believe you can. I have completed all preparations, and everything is in readiness."

"What do you mean?" and Bertha's eyes flashed dangerously.

"Why, surely you know," the broker replied, coolly. "I explained it all to your father, the other day, and bade him have you ready. In other words, dearest Bertha, I have fallen in love with you, and have come to make you my wife."

The minister is in waiting, and in fifteen minutes you will be my bride, and mistress of the finest home in Deadwood!"

"Indeed! Well, I guess not, Minturn McMichael! I am not on the marrying list, just at the present time!"

"But, you must be, my dear! It is imperative that you should be my wife."

"How imperative, sir? I despise and hate you. I'd sooner wed the vilest thing of God's creation than marry you!"

"Bah! It is foolish to talk like that, child. I offer you, on the one hand, wealth, luxury and a life of perpetual sunshine. On the other hand, you and your father stand upon the verge of a terrible fate, which will surely be yours, unless you come to my sheltering arms. In other words, my girl, most damning evidence has been unearthed that you and your father were concerned in the murder of Owen Megargee. Even now, the sheriff is awaiting the word from me to cast you into jail. If you come and marry me, I can silence the sheriff and save your life. If you refuse, I shall not interfere with the sheriff, and you will be arrested, tried, convicted and hanged by the neck until you are dead! Now, then, as you have no time to lose, I give you five minutes in which to choose!" and drawing his gold watch, the broker affixed his gaze to the dial—a hard, merciless expression upon his face.

Bertha Barlow looked at him a moment in disdainful contempt, before she answered him.

"Minturn McMichael," she then said, "you can put up your watch, and the sooner you leave this place, the better it will be for you. If you think I fear you, or heed your cowardly threats, you are dead wrong. I hate and defy you! Arrest us, if you choose, but, rest assured of one thing. If any one ever hangs for the murder of Owen Megargee, it will be his murderer, Minturn McMichael! Now go, you insolent ruffian!"

McMichael heeded her not, but continued to gaze at his watch.

Finally he said:

"The five minutes are up. What is your answer? Will you marry me, or hang? This is your last and only chance to decide!"

"This is my answer, you wretch!" Bertha cried, and seizing a dipper full of hot soup, she flung it dextrously at the broker.

It struck him full in the face, spilled all over him, and caused him to utter a furious oath.

He dashed from the restaurant, on vengeance bent.

Out of doors, he wiped himself off, as best he could, and struck a bee line for the hotel, where he mounted the piazza, excitedly.

A large crowd was gathered about the hotel, and by a cry of "Attention, gentlemen," he caused them to look and listen.

"Men of Deadwood!" he cried, "I have something to say to you. The detective who died to-night, discovered before his death, who were the murderers of my missing partner, Owen Megargee. In the cellar of a cabin, in this camp, he discovered the clothes of the murdered man. He communicated the particulars to me, and I sent the sheriff to get the clothes. Yonder he comes, now, with several citizens, who went with him to find the garments."

The excitement grew intense as Hardgag drew near, carrying a bundle.

He was accompanied by several miners.

"Well, sheriff, what success?" McMichael demanded.

"The detective was right," Hardgag replied. "We found the blood-stained togs in the cellar, just where he said we would. Here they are."

He undid the bundle and flung the bloody garments, one by one, on the piazza.

The crowd gazed at them in horror.

"Yes, they are my late partner's garments," said McMichael. "I recognize the coat in particular, as one he had worn for several years; and here, upon the shirt, are the initials, 'O. M.' Gentlemen, at last the mystery is solved. I'll leave it to you, one and all, if this is not plain evidence that the tenants of the cabin where these things were found secreted ~~are~~ guilty of being in Megargee's murder?"

There was a general cry of assent.

The crowd were willing to assent to nearly anything in their present stage of excitement.

"Hardgag, where did you find these garments?"

"In the cellar of the cabin occupied by 'Bijah and Bertha Barlow,'" the sheriff replied.

"Then, do your duty, sir! These things are damning proof of the guilt of that pair of adventurers. In the name of the law I command you to arrest and lock them up. I will accompany you. The blood of my partner cries for vengeance, and these human lepers shall not es-

cape the punishment they so justly merit. Lead on, sheriff! lead on!"

The broker sprung from the piazza, and he and Hube Hardgag hurried off toward the restaurant, followed by a curious mob, which by no means comprised the best element of the town's population.

Many of the principal citizens of the camp, however, paused at the office of Moll Mystery, the female detective, and collected in groups, engaging in low conversation.

All seemed to be united, as in a body, and it was evident that something unusual was brewing.

The gang, headed by Hardgag and the broker, passed on up the street to the restaurant, where they halted.

There they remained for some five minutes, when, with yells, they started on their return.

Four persons headed the procession, abreast.

The first two were Hardgag and McMichael; the second couple were 'Bijah and Bertha Barlow, bound arm in arm together.

The mob brought up the rear.

As the sheriff and his prisoners drew near the Moll Mystery shanty, the body of citizens, full a hundred strong, moved suddenly out into the street, and before he was aware of their intention, McMichael found himself suddenly seized and disarmed, as was also the sheriff, while other hands released the Barlows.

At the same instant, Thomas Megargee, now, by the removal of a false beard transformed into a handsome young man, was seen upon the stoop in front of Moll Mystery's office.

"Citizens of Deadwood," he cried, "bring the prisoners closer!"

This was done.

Securely handcuffed, McMichael and Hardgag were conducted before the young Chicagoan.

McMichael was deathly pale, while the expression of the sheriff's face was that of bull-dog defiance.

"Minturn McMichael," the Chicagoan cried, "look at me!"

The broker did so, but could not meet the other's accusing gaze, and dropped his eyes.

"Minturn McMichael," young Megargee went on, "I am Tom Megargee, son of your late partner, Owen Megargee, who came here to Deadwood, money laden, only to meet a terrible fate. As soon as I learned of his fate, I came here, also, in disguise, and took measures to run down my father's murderer. I have found the man!"

"'Tis false—false as hell itself!" cried the broker, furiously, "I am no murderer!"

"I will convince the people that you are," Megargee replied, coolly. "When I arrived in Deadwood my suspicions of you grew stronger, and I resolved to employ a detective, on my own account, which I did.

"By and by, I conversed with one prominent citizen and another, and was promised their aid, in case I could prove your guilt. To-night, I will try to do so to their satisfaction, since they promptly responded to my call for assistance. To one and all, I take pleasure in introducing my detective, Moll Mystery.

As he spoke, Moll came forth from her office, and her appearance was a signal for the clapping of hands.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" she said, bowing—for a number of women were present—"I will endeavor to tell you what I know about yonder villain, Minturn McMichael.

"I came to Deadwood, not in the capacity of the professional detective, but to take a look at the famous town of which I had heard so much.

"After my arrival here, I heard of the supposed murder of one Owen Megargee, who left Chicago and started for this place to bring a large sum of money to his partner, Minturn McMichael.

"I picked up what particulars of the case I could, and becoming interested resolved to pick up more. I became associated with Mr. Megargee, here, and we agreed in opinion that McMichael was the man we wanted.

"McMichael visited me; we had a sort of scrimmage; I got the best of him. He was manifestly afraid of me, and on Saturday last, when I was shadowing him, in one of my numerous disguises, he made a bargain with Shanky Slob to kill me. Slob was to do me up, throw me into the street, and leave a paper on my person purporting that it was Deadwood Dick, Junior, who did the job.

"Well, on Sunday, I visited the Barlows, yonder, and learned that McMichael had threatened to charge them with the murder of Owen

Megargee! I gave them assurance of protection, and left.

"After that I shadowed McMichael, almost constantly. I was near him all the time, except Sunday night.

"Then it was that Shanky Slob broke into my place here, and tried to murder me. I was forced to shoot him, in self-defense, and pitched him out of doors, where, the next morning—this morning, he was found dead.

"All this day I have shadowed Minturn McMichael. This forenoon, I was concealed in his own parlor, when the villain had an interview with John Madden the detective. Madden declared that he had found McMichael guilty of Megargee's murder, and threatened to lock him up unless McMichael disgorged half the booty of his crime. The matter was, after much parley, settled, that when Madden should capture me, Thomas Megargee, here, and Deadwood Dick, Junior, and turn the three over into the broker's custody, said Madden was to receive fifty-five thousand dollars.

"When Madden left, the broker shaved off his own beard—tear off his false one if you don't believe me—rigged himself up in rough togs, and left his house for an underground route, and set out for the mountains. I dogged him.

"He went to a mountain cabin, procured his stolen money, and the blood-stained garments of his victim. He then came back to Deadwood.

"I still dogged him.

"He took the bundle of clothes to Barlow's cellar and left them there, then returned to his own house. He soon came forth as you now see him, and had an interview with one Castro, a hotel waiter. I was an eavesdropper.

"He gave Castro a vial of liquid, and five hundred dollars, in consideration of the receipt of which Castro was to dose the tea given to John Madden, at supper-time. He assured Castro the liquid was not poison, but a sleeping potion.

"Well, Castro drugged the tea, and Madden is dead. His murder is on McMichael's soul. I and Thomas Megargee captured Castro, as he was trying to escape. I will produce him, and he will give in his testimony."

Castro was now at once brought forth, and though greatly frightened, corroborated Moll's story in regard to the poisoning.

He also told a crininating story of how he had seen McMichael murder Megargee, and, after stripping the body of everything, throw the body into the roaring creek that flows through Deadwood Gulch, which was then at high water flood.

Dear reader, our tale is nearly told.

Moll Mystery's revelation, combined with that of Castro, was all-sufficient.

McMichael was led off to jail and locked up.

No attempt, however, was made to arrest Castro, and he made his escape.

McMichael never came to trial, for, during the first night of his incarceration, he hanged himself in his cell, and was found dead the next morning.

His house was searched, the stolen money found, and turned over to its rightful owner, Thomas Megargee.

The disgrace fell so heavily upon McMichael's daughter, that she, too, committed suicide.

The body of John Madden was buried in Deadwood, and his Chicago relatives notified.

After receiving a rich reward from young Megargee, Moll Mystery bade a long farewell to Deadwood.

And it was not until some time after her departure, that the truth leaked out that *she* and Deadwood Dick Junior, were one and the same person.

Dick was satisfied with his experience in the magic city, and went forth in search of new fields of adventure.

We may meet him again.

Thomas Megargee and Bertha Barlow became much interested in each other, and later, when he returned eastward, the Barlows went with him.

Bertha will soon become his bride.

THE END.

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